

***The value and benefits of learning a foreign language in
community settings in the UK: older adults' perceptions of
what this does and means for them.***

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the degree of *Doctor of Education by Research* in *TESOL*, April, 2011.

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Rebecca Hooker

ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative and context-specific study into the meaning and value attributed by older people to learning a foreign language in their own time and for reasons mainly unconnected to attainment and qualifications.

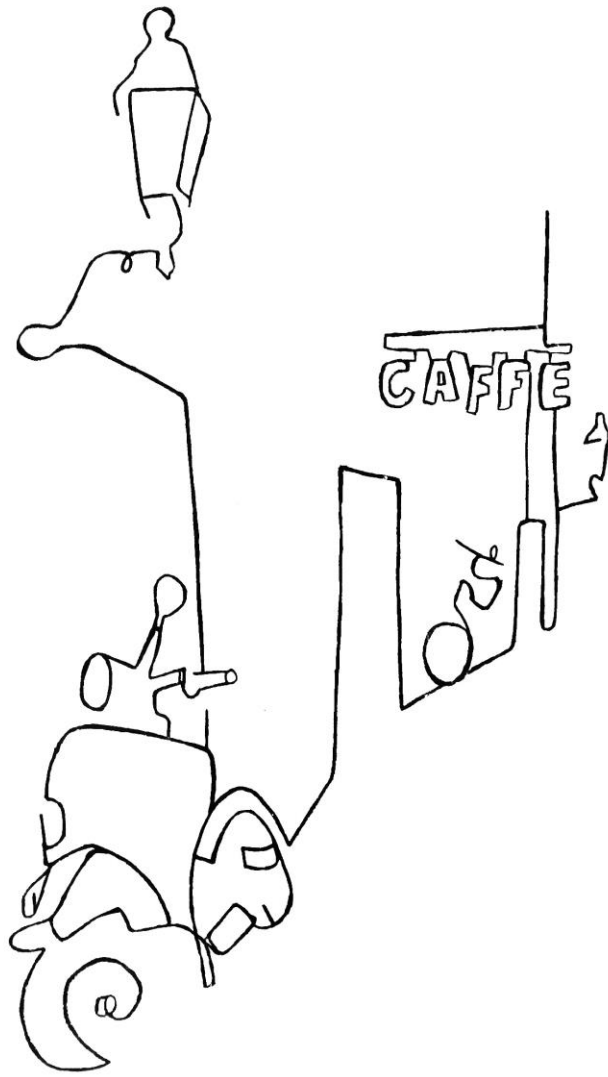
There appear to be two common misconceptions of the British as language learners. The first is that they are 'language barbarians' (Tomlinson, 2004), ever ready to rely on the global dominance of English as a *lingua franca* and unwilling to learn other languages. The second is that learning a language voluntarily and for leisure purposes ('leisure language learning') is regarded as essentially frivolous and of little value. Equally much scholarly research, especially concerning second language acquisition (SLA), implies that language learning is a relatively unsuccessful and difficult endeavour for adults.

This study challenges these views. Far from being reluctant 'language barbarians', who find learning another language onerous and unrewarding, the findings suggest otherwise.

The older (aged 45+) adult learners in this enquiry are not only resoundingly positive about 'leisure language learning' but they derive significant benefits in many areas of their lives from learning, *of their own volition*, and seemingly against the odds. These benefits include but extend beyond functional transactions, such as ordering food when abroad. Participants' perceptions of the personal value of 'leisure language learning' include its role in providing and facilitating: mental stimulus and wellbeing; improved communication; fewer risks when travelling; a repositioning of the self; a purposeful pastime; cultural enrichment; awareness of the 'other', as well as the various benefits of social interaction. Wider advantages for society in general are also implied.

Empirical data were collected by means of in-depth, conversational interviews, exploring participants' personal histories of encounters with and learning foreign languages. A hermeneutic 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer, 2001) has then allowed for a more comprehensive and multi-faceted interpretation and understanding of the experience of adult 'leisure language learning' in community settings.

The resulting text describes the nature and essence of the phenomenon of 'leisure language learning' embracing its meaning for, and impact upon, older adults. This incorporates a way of thinking regarding language pedagogy which goes beyond the usual 'commonplaces' and 'discourses of performance, competency and skills' (Phipps, 2007:2), common to much SLA and linguistic research. At the same time a deeper appreciation of the adult language learning experience is more likely to engender a 'tactful' and 'action-sensitive pedagogy' (van Manen, 1997:168-169): responsive to learners' expectations and motivation, and taking their backgrounds and routes to learning into account.



Caffè Vero by Sally Firino

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In this research many stories have been shared, lived experiences explored and meaning made about the value and benefits of learning another language. The experience for me has been a joyous and expansive one, even if at times, somewhat challenging and frustrating. I would like to mark the completion of this work, by extending my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to those who have made it possible.

To the fifteen learners who volunteered to participate in my study and who so willingly shared both personal and interesting details about their lives and experiences in the taped interviews;

To Dr. Cheryl Hunt and Dr Yongcan Liu, my supervisors, who have read and re-read drafts of my work: allowing me the benefit of their knowledge and expertise, as well as helping me to find my way in very unfamiliar territory;

To Dr Malcolm MacDonald, my former supervisor, who encouraged me initially with my choice of topics and themes, as well as always sharing my enthusiasm;

To Dot from adult and community learning, who has always supported me and my research work;

To the many friends and colleagues, who have listened, helped, offered advice and boosted my morale;

To the multiple authors and writers from whose papers and books I have benefitted so much, and who have inspired me to think and question;

Finally, and most importantly of all, to my husband, Robin and my daughter, Lydia, who have given me their endless and tireless support, care and love, as well as lots of practical help, during these years of study.

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LIST OF DEFINITIONS

(Definitions, abbreviations, terms, idioms)

ACE – Adult and Community Education: adult learning in non-compulsory institutional settings

ACL – Adult and Community Learning – alternative acronym for ACE

‘Airs and graces’ – To have, or put on, ‘airs and graces’ is a slang expression meaning ‘to act and consider oneself superior to others’

A-levels – Advanced-level, non-compulsory examinations normally taken at age 17/18 years in the UK (except Scotland) usually for entry into higher education

AL – Applied linguistics, an interdisciplinary field of study that identifies, investigates and offers solutions to language-related real-life problems

AMTB – Attitude and Motivation Test Battery, a way of quantifying motivational categories, proposed by Robert Gardener and colleagues

‘Couch potato’ – British slang for a lazy person who does nothing but sit down on the ‘couch’

CPH – Lenneberg’s ‘Critical Period Hypothesis’, referring to optimal time for acquiring a second language before puberty

DST – ‘Dynamic Systems Theory’ – framework from mathematics, concerning the development of complex systems

ER – Educational research

ESOL – English to speakers of other languages, normally for immigrants and refugees, living and working permanently in the UK

ESL – English as a second language, term usually used outside the UK

FE – Further education, usually refers to non-compulsory *college* educational provision in the UK, from age 16+

FL – Foreign language

FLL – *Foreign* language learning, usually refers to learning another language for occasional use

‘Food shack’ – John’s expression for a roadside place to get food ‘on the go’, e.g. for truck-drivers

Freemasonry – Worldwide fraternal organisation with members joined by shared ideals of both a moral and a metaphysical nature

GCSE – ‘General Certificate of Secondary Education’. Compulsory school exams usually taken at age 15/16 years in the UK (except Scotland), normally includes English,

Grammar school – Selective non-fee-paying school in the UK, for children aged 11-18, admission by an academic entrance exam.

HE – Higher education, usually refers to *university-level* educational provision in the UK, from age 18+

‘Hold one’s own’/ to ‘hold his own’ – Idiom meaning to be competent at something, be able to cope or manage

HP – Hermeneutical phenomenology

LLAS – Language Linguistics Area Studies

LLL – Leisure language learning/learner

LLs – Leisure language learners

L1 – A person’s first language or native tongue

L2 – An additional language a person speaks after the L1 (L3 & L4 and so on)

‘Meccano’ – A child’s building toy, whereby metal sections are bolted together

MFL – Modern foreign languages, spoken contemporarily in the world

NIACE- National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education – non-governmental organisation working to promote adult learning

OfSted – The Office for Standards in Education, a government educational inspectorate in the UK

O'-levels – Academic, exam-based school qualifications, used in the UK from the 1950s to 1988 - normally taken by pupils aged 15/16. They are still used today in some Commonwealth countries.

OU – The Open University, a commercial higher-level educational institution, based in the UK, enabling people to study independently, with guidance, often at home, for degree-level courses in a wide range of subjects

'Paying through the nose' - Someone paying extra for something, more than it is worth

PR – Phenomenological research

Primary school – Compulsory school in the UK, for children aged 5-11

Public school – Fee-paying school in the UK whereby attendance is paid for by the term

Secondary school – Compulsory school in the UK, for children aged 11-18

'Show-off' – Derogatory term meaning to make a vain display of oneself, to attract admiration and attention; noun and verb

Skiving – To be absent from school or any compulsory activity, without authority or official permission

SLA – Second language acquisition, the area of linguistics devoted to understanding how languages are perceived, processed, acquired and appropriated by learners

SLL – *Second* language learning, usually refers to learning another language for regular use, especially when working or living in another country

'Squaddy/ squaddies' - British slang for a regular lower rank and non-commissioned soldier, rather pejorative

'Tommy' - wartime (possibly first world-war) slang for a regular British soldier

TESOL – Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages, field of language pedagogy for teaching English as an additional language, quite often outside the UK

TEFL – Teaching English as a Foreign Language, term usually applied for the teaching of students learning English for occasional use, often for work or holidays. In the UK, this is often understood to refer to students learning on a holiday in an English-speaking country.

'Thick as a plank' – a slang expression in the UK meaning 'very stupid'

'Three score years and ten' - a poetic or literary reference to being over 70 years old

TLL – Tourist language learning/ learner, Alison Phipps's anthropological term for an adult learner learning a foreign language primarily for tourism purposes

TLLs – Tourist language learners

YMCA – Young Men's Christian Association – a non-profit community organisation, initially founded for young men and boys, dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of people of all ages, creeds and backgrounds.

Wanderlust – German word for 'a great desire to wander, travel or rove'

They all had a *need* to learn Italian. Or that's the way it looks'.
'What was your need to learn it?' she asked.
Barry looked a bit awkward. 'Oh well it has to do with being there for the World Cup,' he said. 'I went with a crowd but I met a lot of nice Italian people and I felt as thick as a plank not being able to speak their language.'

(Maeve Binchy, '*Evening Class*', 1997:395)

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the focus and the aims underpinning this thesis, incorporating the relevant socio-political and personal background and rationale.

1.1 The focus

The voluntary learning of a foreign language for leisure purposes constitutes a challenging and yet beneficial endeavour for older adult learners, affecting many aspects of their lives.

This is the premise upon which this thesis has been constructed, focusing upon the *benefits* and personal *value* of learning an additional language: both for the individual learner and for society as a whole. The 'lived experiences' (van Manen, 1990:180) of a small number of language learners, all British nationals, mainly in middle-late adulthood, are explored empirically. Such learners have invested time, money and effort in learning a foreign language for leisure purposes, in community settings (popularly known in England as 'evening classes'). The overall aim is to present an interpretative description of what these language learning experiences have 'meant' and 'done' (Biesta *et al*, 2008) for learners in this seldom-investigated context.

The empirical enquiry investigates what these *leisure language learners* (LLLs) derive from such an endeavour and what they perceive to be of personal benefit and value. The term *leisure language learner/ learning* (LLL) is used as convenient shorthand to refer to adults learning for purposes connected to leisure, rather than to formal assessment and qualifications. Understanding the rationale underlying LLL also helps in appreciating the apparent paradox of why such learners persevere with their classes, given the often difficult odds and conditions. These include the everyday biological and cognitive constraints of

ageing, which constitute part of the argument, presented in the second language acquisition (SLA) and applied linguistics (AL) literature that learning another language is a difficult and not entirely successful endeavour for learners beyond puberty.

Moreover it is widely accepted that recourse to a globally-dominant language like English is an ever-present option for communication for all these research participants. Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990, in Nie, 2000:1) observe that 80% of all the information in the world is stored and consumed in English. Consequently opportunities for British LLLs to practice their target language are often meagre and infrequent (Phipps, 2007). This partly explains why most studies of language acquisition and language pedagogy tend to focus upon foreign students learning English all over the world, rather than upon English-speakers learning other foreign languages.

An attempt is made to identify and describe *how* and *which* of the language-learning experiences in the adult and community education (ACE) sector may contribute to the rationale inspiring adults to continue learning another language. What perceived *benefits* constitute the value and the transformational quality of LLL? This study culminates in an interpretative text giving a description of the impact that learning another language is perceived to have upon English-speaking adults learning in the UK in this particular context.

Discourse regarding successful or functional acquisition of linguistic systems by adult learners is not emphasised here. The focus is upon more than just the language itself. This entails a thoughtful 'textured' (Law, 2004:2) empirical consideration of the nature of LLL. It goes beyond the physical or institutional characteristics of the educational setting or learning process and embraces applications of the language learning in the world outside the classroom. This also involves an exploration of awareness of foreign languages and related *foreignness*. The variables inherent in learners' socio-cultural backgrounds, e.g. age, occupation or educational/language learning history are relevant, but for background information only, rather than being factored into analysis. Framing the research in this way allows the exploration to go beyond some of the more static or one-dimensional portrayals of motivation for learning another

language given in the literature (see chapter two). This present thesis, although not strictly a motivational study, considers motivation, but in the 'post-actional' phase (e.g. when a learning programme is completed) outlined in Dörnyei's and Ottó's (1998) dynamic 'process model' of motivation. This is when learners evaluate their own language learning experiences: determining future actions and plans.

1.2 Aims

The practical aim of this study is to consider adult LLLs': beliefs; expectations; motivation and intentions regarding learning, and to present these in a form which enables practitioners to incorporate them into teaching praxis. The ultimate aim is to contribute to 'tactful' and 'action-sensitive' pedagogy (van Manen, 1990; 1997). This reflects the thinking of writers such as Dewey (1938) who advocates the need to understand the learner *as well as* the subject matter.

Any discourse outlining the benefits derived from any type of lifelong learning can only lend strength to the widely-acknowledged and comprehensive benefits of adult participation in learning in general. As Tuckett and Aldridge, of the UK National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE), write:

There is widespread agreement that participation in learning makes a difference to the economic and social wellbeing of individuals, families, communities and nations. Learning is good for your health, for your longevity, and for the level of social cohesion in the community in which you live. In addition, learning leaks...knowledge and skills acquired for one purpose can often be put to use in othersIn short, participation in learning through the life span matters. (2009:23)

The UK's Government 'Foresight' report (2008), focusing on wellbeing and learning, also highlights the advantages to an ageing population of lifelong learning.

The issue of 'age' and learners is particularly relevant to me, in that the area in southern England where I live and teach has an older than average population (see chapter three). However, it is how *language* learning specifically can be transformational, beneficially or otherwise, for adults and what it means for

them, which represents the core phenomenon at the heart of this research.

Consequently the research question is:

What does learning a foreign language ‘do’ and ‘mean’ for older adults learning a language in community settings in the UK, as viewed from the learners’ perspective?

At the same time, it is important to be mindful of the fact, as is apparent throughout this whole enquiry, that it is not always easy to discriminate between what learning a language actually ‘does’ (its impact or effects) from what it actually ‘means’ (its import or value) to learners. Equally the point at which ‘learning’ a language, becomes ‘applying’ or ‘using’ a language is also often unclear.

1.3 Positioning the study

This study contrasts with previous studies looking at adult language learning, which have tended to focus upon the ‘understanding of language functioning in the large sense’ (Bialystok, 1998:500). Applied linguistics serves the function of identifying, investigating, and offering solutions to language-related real-life problems. Bialystok claims that one of these is the practical question inspiring early AL studies: “How can educators improve foreign language learning?” (*ibid*: 498). This is a question which Bialystok argues would be well-served by AL researchers cooperating with other disciplines.

The following investigation foregrounds the *experiences* and *social interaction* of older adults learning a foreign language through choice, both in the classroom and in the world at large.

LLL in community settings contrasts with language learning within the context of higher education or further education. In the latter context, the *instrumental* and ‘benefits’ of language learning are clearly identifiable through *accreditation and qualifications*.

The overall aim is to increase understanding of the former context, i.e. what constitutes *voluntary* and *non-accredited* foreign language learning in

community settings. Its characteristics and its perceived value are not so immediately identifiable or quantifiable.

The research focus rests upon the perceived impact and meaning of all aspects of LLL upon adults, from the *learners'* point of view rather than as it is construed by the research or teaching communities. The aim is to evoke recognition and awareness amongst readers of what it is like to be a native-English speaker in the UK, learning a foreign language beyond compulsory schooling. Before looking in more depth at the wide breadth of literature and various stakeholder-perspectives concerning this topic, a personal introduction is appropriate.

As Gadamer (2001:48) posits, the art of interpretation predicates the explicit declaration of one's starting position and one's own prejudices: the 'horizon' from which one is working, so that through conversation and dialogue, with others, one's own 'horizon' can be fused with other 'horizons'. This enables a new and composite idea to be built of the matter in hand. With another pertinent metaphor, Brookfield suggests that we view our teaching through 'four critically reflective lenses'. These lenses are: '(1) our autobiographies as teachers and learners, (2) our colleagues' experiences, (3) our students' eyes, and 4) theoretical literature' (1995:29).

1.4 Personal introduction

It seems fitting that my 'horizons' as a researcher and teacher should explicitly include reference to my own historical encounters with other languages, especially because I have *learned* other foreign languages as an adult. My language learning history reflects some of the personal benefits derived.

1.4.1 A language learning history

I discovered early, aged about 11, that I enjoyed learning *foreign* languages, especially related to family life in other countries. I have always been curious about what foreign people might be thinking and about their way of being; I am intrigued by difference, and the 'other'. I also enjoyed learning Latin at school, because it helped in identifying the structural patterns in other languages.

In my teens, I enjoyed the 'grand culture' offered by foreign texts, often with risqué topics being addressed in poetry, drama, and cinema, in both French and German, and later in Italian at university. I discovered the sense of escapism, the excitement of travelling, along with the thrill of communicating in another language. I went to France and Germany on *four* school exchanges as well as travelling extensively with my family. On such trips there were new cultural and linguistic experiences, and the opportunity to 'try on' a new identity.

More recently on holidays to other countries I have always attempted to use a few words of an unfamiliar language, e.g. Greek in Cyprus and Arabic in Tunisia. I have been rewarded with the smiles and sense of 'human-relatedness' (Phipps, 2007:3) that result from even the most fleeting of exchanges. This has made me feel to be much more of an 'insider' in the country I am visiting, and better able to access cultural information about the country and its people.

I have needed to speak languages in my work: as a tour guide in Europe; in international publishing, and now later in my life as a language teacher. I have lived and worked long-term in both Italy and Austria and also know that to be accepted by the local people, it is advisable to have some command of the language and knowledge of the customs. Living and working abroad has afforded me insights into the living culture: the mores; daily activities, as well as on-the-spot opportunities to use a language other than my own.

I have struggled with learning a *second* language for survival, needing both German and Italian to progress in my life abroad, e.g. for obtaining a work permit. I have enjoyed too the personal freedom and tolerances, afforded to a 'foreigner' abroad.

1.4.2 Language teaching

Apart from the pleasure derived from teaching in general, I have been in a position, through language teaching, to share knowledge of four languages and cultures: French, Italian, German, and my first language, English, with students both abroad and in the UK. I have been both a facilitator and a conduit to realms of new knowledge and experience, both linguistically and culturally.

I teach languages on a part-time basis in two similar but distinctly different contexts:

Firstly I teach English as a *second* language to adult speakers of other languages (ESOL): e.g. immigrants and migrant workers, living and working in the UK. Not only is it enlightening to share ESOL learners' heterogeneous cultural backgrounds, but it is also gratifying to share my own culture and language: helping to facilitate learners' progression and everyday survival in the UK. However, in my experience, ESOL learning often tends to be for pragmatic reasons, e.g. getting a job or gaining citizenship. This learning is not always voluntary. It can be required for working or remaining in the UK.

Secondly, I teach modern *foreign* languages (MFL): French, Italian and German to adults: learning mostly of their own volition for leisure purposes in adult and community educational (ACE) settings. The pleasure in teaching these groups of learners (all native English-speakers) involves the opportunity to explore other foreign cultures, as well as the language itself. It is this latter type of learners, whose experiences of *foreign* language learning provide the contextual background and data for this thesis.

I am interested in exploring the different motivation affecting these LLLs at all stages of their learning, as well as in understanding their learning experiences to be able to inform teaching practice. This is where my role of researcher begins.

1.4.3 Research

The idea to study the 'older' language learner arose during the course of my Master's programme. My Master's dissertation (Hooker, 2007) focuses on the instructional and meditational preferences of adult *second* language (ESOL) learners in the UK.

I further investigated adult ESOL teaching and learning with a critique of the UK ESOL Core Curriculum. Building on this research, I explored the notion of 'play' as a pedagogical approach to counterbalance the functionality of the same

curriculum, as well as conducting a study of paralinguistics in language teaching.

These findings were developed further in a small-scale empirical study (Hooker, 2008) investigating 'de-motivation' amongst older adults learning a *foreign* language in ACE settings. This latter study highlights the positive motivation, that appears to prevail in LLL classes in the UK.

The work of the cognitive psychologist, Ellen Bialystok, has influenced me significantly. Together with her colleagues, Bialystok highlights the notion that bilingualism may have a positive effect on cognitive development in both adults and children (2001; Bialystok *et al*, 2004; Bialystok and Craik, 2006; Bialystok *et al*, 2007).

Additionally I conducted a discourse-analysis study (Hooker, 2008) concentrating specifically on the popularisation of Bialystok's scientific research (Bialystok *et al*, 2007), which concerns the slowing of the onset of Alzheimer's disease as a result of a lifetime's experience of bilingualism.

Bialystok's work has fuelled my interest in incorporating other approaches (e.g. the perspectives of cognition and psychology) into researching the effects of adults' contact and experiences with another language in different contexts. I believe that this complements my abiding concern with linguistics and the languages themselves.

However for this thesis the constraints of time and space, as well as my disciplinary specialisation, i.e. language pedagogy, are self-evident. The technological and scientific resources for a truly interdisciplinary enquiry are not available to me at this stage. Consequently the aim of this thesis remains to acquire a better understanding of the impact and meaning of *learning* an additional language later in life upon adults, as seen through their own eyes.

1.5 Critical and socio-political dimensions

When considering learner differences and ‘learner contributions’ (Breen, 2001) to language learning, it appears, as Coupland (2001) suggests, that there is a dearth of linguistic studies concerning the particular social variable of ‘age’ in comparison with that of race, gender or class. In the SLA/ AL literature the tendency has been to concentrate upon the ‘ideal’ age for learners’ ‘ultimate’ or ‘native-like’ attainment (see chapter two). Most attention has been paid to investigating ‘young learners’, mainly within compulsory education.

My choice of ‘age’ as it impacts upon language was not born out of a ‘problem’ as such. As Gadamer (2001: 50) notes, ‘no problem just falls from heaven. Something awakens our interest.’ In my case it was that ‘age’ is an important contextual variable, in that most of the learners I teach tend to be older (see chapter three).

I have taught languages to secondary schoolchildren living in a seaside area in Southern England. This region is distinguished by low ethnic and linguistic diversity (nearly 95% of the population are defined as ‘white British’); few foreign visitors, and difficult transport connections to foreign travel. As a result many local schoolchildren have few ‘foreign’ references. Foreign languages are often viewed as irrelevant and students can be resistant to learning the traditional curriculum choices of French or German.

On the other hand, my subsequent experience of working with adult learners in this same community contrasts with that of these younger learners. The adults tend to be highly-motivated and engaged. Added to which these adults are often more worldly: having travelled and experienced more *foreignness* in their lives. It is also significant that: these LLLs are learning entirely of their own volition; are enthusiastic consumers of education, and are normally unconstrained in their learning by accountability measures, such as test or examination requirements.

However the critical dimension to this particular type of non-accredited educational provision in the UK lies outside the classroom. In the current

economic climate funding for 'leisure' rather than work/skills-based learning has been dramatically reduced. The British Labour Government decided to axe over 1.5 million learning places across the adult learning sector in general between 2007 and 2009. This was further compounded by the same government's proposition to cut public subsidy from the 'evening class' section of ACE. It was deemed that courses 'addressing people's curiosity or desire for self-fulfilment' (Kingston, 2009:para.2) rather than making them employable should get less financial assistance.

Additionally, the erstwhile education minister, John Denham, exemplified courses such as 'Holiday Spanish' as ones with the 'right frivolity quotient' (Kingston, *ibid* :para.1) to justify public spending cuts in favour of more skills-based learning, often with the agenda of keeping older people economically active for longer. This is in spite of worldwide research indicating the clear benefits of lifelong-learning for the 'Third Age' (i.e. aged 50+) for self-enrichment and empowerment (Wolff, 2000). It remains to be seen what real changes in adult learning provision will be effectuated by the present coalition government.

Hence, a key critical issue for adult language education in England lies with maintaining the viability of non-employment-related provision, already at the margins of the whole educational framework. Discourse regarding any benefits that older adults derive from learning a language for leisure purposes, can only enhance the case for continued funding of LLL provision, especially in the context of an ageing population and the political debates it engenders.

The impact of adulthood on the language learning process has always interested me, underpinned as it is by the general adage that "language learning is easier for children". Like many teachers, I have always been receptive to anything to improve my practice both technically and experientially. Knowing how to improve the learning experience for adult learners is an important aesthetic and ethical consideration. I identify closely with van Manen's belief that the principle that guides many educators is a desire to know what contributes toward the good of a person, together with a 'sense of the pedagogic Good' (van Manen, 1982). Understanding what benefits adult

learners are drawing from their language learning experiences, as well as what is detrimental to their progress, can only help to inform 'best practice'. It is one of the main purposes of undertaking this research. However, I endorse van Manen's definition of 'best practice' as *not* referring to 'the trainable skills and specialised bodies of knowledge' necessary for professions such as pedagogy, but 'the abilities that have to do with discretionary, intuitive, pathic and tactful capacities' (1997: xviii).

Nevertheless institutional practice in the UK lies within a political landscape of accountability and regulation. UK educational inspectorates such as the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted) require evidence of 'best practice', and active teaching and learning. This is more difficult in the ACE context, with the absence of formal qualifications with which to measure attainment. Ofsted's 2007 evaluation report of language learning in the UK recommends that adult education providers should 'ensure that their provision is tailored to meet the varied needs of their adult learners' (2007:7).

Confusingly, in the same report, the recommendation is to include more *work*-related language provision in ACE, as Ofsted inspections have indicated that 'language learning was often classed as a leisure activity, reinforcing the perception that it had no intrinsic value' (2007:47-48).

So, a key institutional view appears to emphasise the apparently 'lesser' value of learning for leisure purposes. It is this position which this thesis aims to de-construct.

There was an extraordinary bond amongst the people in the class. It was if they were on a desert island and their only hope of rescue was to learn the language and remember everything they were taught. Possibly because Signora believed they were capable of great feats they began to believe it too.

(Binchy, *ibid*: 180)

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter investigates what theory reveals about adult language learning. It progresses through multiple stakeholder positions, viewing the phenomenon from a 'third-person' perspective: from outside the experience. It culminates in a broad conceptualisation and examples of the 'benefits' of learning another language, both for the learner and for society in general.

2.1 Introduction

In this literature review the thread of the discussion moves through a multidisciplinary consideration of the *impact* and *meaning* of learning another language upon adults. The main aim is to focus upon the 'benefits' (from Latin, *bene facere*: to do well, any good), which may be identified or construed as resulting from doing so.

However to establish the 'benefits' and 'value' of learning an additional language it is helpful to understand the assumptions about the process of adult second language acquisition and learning (SLA/SLL).

Consequently the investigation examines: firstly the *neurological/biological* effects of language learning upon the domains and architecture of the brain; secondly, the *psychological/cognitive* dimension of individuals interacting mentally with the language learning process and thirdly how various *socio-cultural/contextual* factors affect language learners in social interaction. As such the enquiry moves from an exploration of *how* older adults appear to be learning another language; to *why* they are motivated to do so, and finally asks the key question of *what* learning an additional language 'means' and 'does' for them and society in general.

The themes covered in this chapter include:

- the various effects of 'age' or 'maturation' upon second language acquisition/learning (SLA/SLL);

- a conceptualisation of the role and importance of both motivation and context in adult language learning;
- an identification of the perceived ‘benefits’ of language learning

At the same time reviewing the theoretical background takes into account two key issues: a) the place of theory in praxis and research, and b) the need for a wide-ranging and interdisciplinary choice of literature, supporting the research question,

What does learning a foreign language ‘do’ and ‘mean’ for older adults learning a language in community settings in the UK, from the learners’ perspective?

2.1.1 The place of theory

There is a compelling symposium in ‘*TESOL Quarterly*’ magazine (2008), which discusses the place and meaning of ‘theory’ in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and language teaching in general. I have drawn on several viewpoints in this series of articles, as they underpin some of the selected literature for this review and are relevant to language teaching praxis:

The linguist, Noam Chomsky, cited in Cumming’s article (2008:287), alleges that:

People who are involved in some practical activity such as teaching languages, translation or building bridges should probably keep an eye on the sciences. But they probably shouldn’t take it too seriously because the capacity to carry out practical activities without much conscious awareness of what you’re doing is usually far more advanced than scientific knowledge (Chomsky, 1988:180).

Larsen-Freeman’s contrasting viewpoint (2008:293) finds an important place and function for theory in TESOL/ language teaching. She alleges that by interacting with others’ “sense of plausibility” (Prabhu, 1990:19), even those with whom we disagree, our teaching and research practice potentially remain ‘vital’. She writes (*op. cit.*) of theory as offering TESOL/ language teachers a way of viewing what they do clearly; connecting with others, and most importantly making sense of experience. This is the same reflective process I am asking of my research participants, and it underpins this whole study.

2.1.2 Interdisciplinary research and wide-ranging literature

Following Cumming (2008:287), language teachers need to have theoretical knowledge about how students learn, but also about other foundational fields

such as language, general education and society. Field (2008) also suggests broadening teacher knowledge to encompass such subject domains as: discourse analysis, language pathology, computer modelling and neuroscience.

Silberstein gives a further analogy positioning TESOL/ language teaching as an “applied” or “service” field, like healthcare. As such it is appropriate, as is the case with healthcare professionals to ‘rely on research from allied fields (neurology, sociology, psychology, linguistics, anthropology, etc.) to change the current trajectory of a human being’ (Silberstein, 2008:299). In this vein, she writes further of ‘saving the “patient” from monolingualism, literally changing the brain and behaviour, altering the future’, incorporating the ‘imaginings of the student’ (*ibid*: 299). Although not entirely comfortable with the deficit model inherent in this metaphor, I agree that this is a powerful argument for an interdisciplinary outlook. I also believe that interpreting the substantive knowledge of experts in other disciplines allows for different modalities of viewing and ‘appreciating’ a phenomenon.

The case against an interdisciplinary approach is also explored in this TESOL symposium (*ibid*). One of the arguments *against* this is that other disciplines have approaches which may be dissonant with those used by language teaching professionals. Kaplan argues that ‘TESOL as a field of study seems to lie at the disjuncture between three war zones of theory-linguistic theory, applied linguistics theory and educational theory’ (2008:294). As such, he points out, inter-relating these directly to practice splits TESOL as a field of scholarly study and is fraught with challenges.

However it is not always necessary to adopt an approach in its entirety. For all the stages of this research, and for my teaching practice, the ‘bricolage’ approach (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:233) is used. This comes from French: *bricoleur*, meaning a handyman using whatever is at hand to do the job. It is commonly used in cultural studies to indicate ‘a fusion of disparate ideas, materials or methods’ (Baynham *et al*, 2007:9). The latter study concerning the state of ESOL teaching/learning in the UK found this to be a common approach of ESOL teachers (*ibid*).

Nevertheless working outside of the area one knows entails working in tandem with other experts and accepting their interpretations of the relevant knowledge as valid, as it is difficult to be both a generalist and a specialist concurrently. As is clear from this literature review, some findings have to come ‘second-hand’, from spreading the net for knowledge wide, and it is difficult to have deep knowledge in all related fields.

At the same time a ‘connectionist’ (N. Ellis, 2003) perspective, in either research or praxis: viewing language acquisition and learning as ‘complex adaptive systems’ (N. Ellis and Larsen-Freeman, 2009), goes against current trends or demand for specialism in linguistics. ‘Specialism’ may include research in discrete areas, such as lexis or phonetics; skills-based specialism such as reading or writing, or specialism such as teaching English for specific purposes, e.g. for law. However this begs the question, “How does the adult language *learner* fit in with this approach?”

Even in the short phrase of ‘adult language learning’ each word evokes separate and complex areas of enquiry and dichotomies:

- ‘*adult*’ - e.g. young learners versus older learners; gerontology ; lifelong development; identity; experience;
- ‘*language*’ - e.g. *first* versus *second* language; *second* versus *foreign* language; linguistic systems;
- ‘*learning*’ - e.g. teaching/learning; compulsory/non-compulsory; acquisition; appropriation; competence; attainment.

As a result the development of the theoretical background to this study has been wide-ranging and emergent. This is partly due to the lack of antecedent studies concentrating specifically on the experiences of adult ‘*leisure*’ language learners’ (LLLs): learning for leisure purposes in community settings because they *want to*. There has been no clear path to information or theory regarding the ‘benefits’ or ‘value’ of language learning in this specific context and conditions.

The metaphor of a *journey* through the literature is an apt one for a study focusing upon *language* learning, with its implications of travel for learners in both an actual and an imagined sense. It is also in keeping with the *voyages* of

self-discovery inherent in the narratives of individual language learning histories in the empirical work. This metaphor continues through the methodology, following Kvale and Brinkmann's description of the researcher as 'interviewer as traveler' (2009:48-9). This involves the '*interviewer-traveler*' (*ibid.*) wandering through the territory of a new country (i.e. the research problem), conversing with the local 'inhabitants' (i.e. the participants) and encouraging them to tell their stories, which are then brought 'home' (i.e. to the research community). However, although informed or even transformed by all the places visited, it may not be possible for the researcher to describe in detail the import and relevance of all the ports of call on the research journey; some areas are just passed through.

At the same time the characteristics of these people in this new country need to be taken into account. The first factor often cited when examining the *how* of *adult* language learning is that of 'age', as it relates to linguistic-processing.

2.2 Age and multilingualism

Coupland refers to *age* as 'sociolinguistics' under-developed social dimension' (2001:185) with much social/sociolinguistic research covering language issues largely related to changes, development and use in early life; in adolescence and maturation. Additionally there appears to be a preoccupation with the difficulties associated with *pathological* (i.e. problematic) ageing, as it relates to first (L1) and second language (L2) proficiency and learning. Coupland affirms that there has been little interest in the social experiences of regular adults relating to language, their own and others, especially in *non-pathological* (i.e. unproblematic) circumstances, along with the relevant implications for issues of identity.

De Bot and Makoni (2003) explain that this is partially due to the fact that any research making connections between ageing and language tends to be discipline-led, and often reinforces commonly-held beliefs about ageing and language. They note that disciplines like biomedicine and psycholinguistics tend to treat ageing as 'inherently problematic' (*ibid*:4). Sociolinguistics on the other hand, they argue, tends to treat ageing as 'inherently unproblematic with

the crisis in ageing being attributed to mediating factors like culture and language and the nature of the social cultural factors' (*ibid*).

Following Coupland (2001), it seems that 'age' is a neglected variable, as it is equally a salient element of social identity as gender, race or class. Additionally, the political dimension of age/ ageing is becoming evermore important in discourse (mediated by language itself) regarding 'age', especially in light of an increasingly-ageing population. In 2025 the worldwide number of people aged over 60 is expected to be approximately 1.2 billion (World Health Organisation, 2002).

2.2.1 Asset or liability?

It is difficult to understand and conceptualise the effects of 'language' *per se* upon people. Linguistic systems are abstract structures, although language is mediated through symbols and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). De Bot & Makoni propose the 'Dynamic Systems Theory' (DST), from the field of mathematics, as a framework for linking research on language and ageing with ideas on the development of complex systems (2003:5). DST as applied to language development may be seen as 'a system of interacting variables that is constantly changing due to interaction with its environment and self reorganization' (*ibid*). Although DST has not been adopted for this present study, it provides a means of considering the complexities and dynamism of all aspects of adult language learning.

Additionally de Bot and Makoni's volume (*ibid*) provides a wide range of research regarding the effects of age/ageing upon linguistic-processing in multilingual contexts. However de Bot is an applied linguist and the most prevalent approach adopted here is both quantitative and scientific, emanating from the fields of psycholinguistics, cognition and neuropsychology.

De Bot and Makoni's volume poses the questions: a) 'whether multilingualism is an asset or a liability', and b) 'to what extent it can be seen as resource' (*ibid*: 58). Despite the lack of a satisfactory definition of 'bilingualism' or 'multilingualism' this range of enquiry goes from both extremes:

On the one hand there are identifiable 'benefits' from multilingualism:

Research reported by Bialystok *et al.* (2004) shows the positive effect of bilinguals being able to respond more rapidly than monolinguals to conditions placing greater demands on 'working memory'. The experimentation here investigated using the brain for *non-linguistic* processing. This suggests that linguistic-processing is part of the *whole* cognitive function rather than operating separately and that using multiple linguistic systems boosts the *whole* cognitive system.

Additionally Herdina and Jessner (2002) argue that knowledge of multiple languages leads to 'more advanced meta-linguistic skills that may be relied on in any language' (de Bot and Makoni, *op. cit.*:58). This supports Singleton's 'theory of affordances' (Singleton and Aronin, 2007) in language learning, i.e. once one additional language has been acquired, to whatever degree, it 'affords' the potential to learn further languages with levels of greater ease.

On the other hand multilingualism may be a 'liability': De Bot and Makoni (*op. cit.*:77) refer to psycho-analytic studies which show instances of proficiency in another language being an active stimulant of painful memories. For example one study respondent says:

"I'm afraid. I don't want to talk German. I have the feeling that in talking German I shall have to remember something that I wanted to forget" (In Schrauf, 2000)

The inference is to 'multiple selves', which 'may be formed by and mediated by different languages' (*op. cit.*:77). Schmid's (2003) findings were similar with elderly Jewish people, who, having fled Germany in the 1930s, triggered harrowing associations through the use of German (de Bot and Makoni, *op. cit.*).

However for the next step it is necessary to relate interpretations of some of these neurological and psychological findings directly to SLA/SLL research studies, which are more regularly-cited in the language teaching field.

2.2.2 Age and SLA

Research in applied linguistics (AL) and language pedagogy combining the topic of adult SLL/SLA has tended to either rest with the 'age' or 'maturational'

effects in learning an additional language (e.g. Singleton and Lengyel, 1995). This type of research stresses the perceived difficulties in 'ultimate' attainment for language learners beyond puberty. This originates from the seminal work carried out by Lenneberg (1967) and Penfold and Roberts (1959). The concept of the 'good [i.e. ideal] language learner' and the 'critical period hypothesis' (CPH): posited by Lenneberg remain both influential *and* hotly-debated.

In the following section I consider the CPH as part of the 'linguistic/cognitive *versus* the socio-cultural debate' with regards to adult SLA/SLL. I consider two perspectives:

On the one hand, there is the enduring view which privileges the importance of the *cognitive* role of the processing mechanisms, together with learner aptitude and potential for language learning. On the other hand, there is the developing view taking into account the *socio-cultural* and *contextual* aspects of language learning, involving dynamic variables.

Ontologically the position adopted in this thesis is one founded upon relativity, which entails a view of language pedagogy as incorporating:

- a systematic teaching of the linguistic systems and their rules;
- the multiple realities and perceptions of the learners;
- the pragmatics and social nature of the learning setting.

As a result, any 'one-size-fits-all' explanation or theory for any aspect of second language acquisition or learning is rejected. Added to which, trying to include all of the key SLA/SLL theories is unfeasible for a thesis of this size.

Nevertheless attending to the practical aspects of language teaching is difficult without some basic knowledge of the SLA process. Linguistic knowledge is the meditational framework upon which language programmes are constructed, not communicative intent or learner characteristics, although these are important too.

Mitchell and Myles, give a rigorous account of SLL theories, distinguishing three main points of view among SLL researchers:

- **The linguistic perspective** - concerned with modelling language structures and processes within the mind;
- **The social psychological perspective** - concerned with modelling individual learner differences, and their implications for eventual learning success;
- **The socio-cultural perspective** - concerned with learners as social beings and members of social groups/networks. (2004:24)

With this in mind it is therefore appropriate to review next the literature about the 'age factor' (Singleton and Lengyel, 1995) in SLA in order to conceptualise where the linguistic and social psychological dimensions of 'age' and 'language learning' might intersect.

What is clear from most SLA research focusing upon 'older' or 'younger' language learners or any particular point in the lifespan is that it inevitably will allude to the 'critical period hypothesis' (CPH). Lenneberg (*op. cit.*), following observations by the neuroscientists, Penfield and Roberts, concerning the 'biological clock of the brain' (1959:140), posited the optimal time to acquire a second language *naturalistically* as being the time before puberty. After this 'critical period' brain maturation involving the completion of 'hemispheric lateralisation' (i.e. brain function being attributed to either the left or right side of the brain) and lack of structural plasticity in the brain limits the faculty of language acquisition and learning directly from (unmodified) input. This appears to make the *unmediated* learning of a second language much harder for adults.

The CPH is part of the linguistic and mentalist perspective of looking at language as a discrete and abstract system with rules. It also contributes to 'neuro-functional theory', (R. Ellis, 1986). Various accounts of this have contributed to the understanding of age difference, formulaic speech, fossilisation and patterns regarding SLA/SLL (Matsuoka and Evans, 2004). As Breen comments, research and theory alike seek to 'identify that which is stable, consistent and common among learner contributions' (2001:10). 'Age' has been conceptualised as a variable factor in linguistic-processing. It has been positioned in order to understand its influence in potential for successful attainment in SLA, i.e. what effects do adults have *upon* the SLA process.

For example one study found that learning an L2 stimulated and altered the grey matter in the left interior parietal cortex of the brain, an area believed to

process information in the same way exercise builds muscles (Mechelli *et al*, 2004a;2004b). The effect was especially noticeable in the 'early' bilingual subjects in this study. Mechelli implied from this in a spoken interview that:

"older people won't be as fluent as people who learned earlier in life....they won't be as good as early bilinguals who learned for example, before the age of five or before the age of 10 " (2004b)

This highlights the contentious nature of any inferences drawn from research studying the architecture and the domains of the brain. In the research that centres upon the 'younger is better' hegemony fuelled by the CPH, and other neuro-scientific studies, there is clearly a deficit model at work, putting the older learner at an immediate disadvantage.

The more pressing question is whether older learners themselves actually *perceive* their advancing years or late start to language learning as a disadvantage, and how they deal with this. Little attention has been paid to older learners' personal strategies and the compensations that are made by adults to counter any assumed cognitive disadvantage from learning later in life.

It is not possible within the confines of this thesis to outline fully the arguments for and against the CPH, representing as it does only one viewpoint of the difficulties involved in learning a language beyond childhood. The CPH has its supporters (e.g. Long, 1990) and its detractors (e.g. Bialystok and Hakuta, 1999). Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003) give a comprehensive account of 'maturational constraints' in SLA. Nevertheless, whatever position is taken on the ever-controversial CPH, there is some consensus that, regarding competence or attainment, there may be advantages in early exposure to and learning of an L2. This is certainly so regarding thinking about 'native-like pronunciation' (e.g. Moyer, 1999).

Lenneberg's original claim spawning the many writings about the CPH was that:

Automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear [after puberty] and foreign languages have to be taught through a conscious and labored effort. Foreign accents cannot be easily overcome after puberty. However, a person can learn to communicate at the age of forty. This does not trouble our basic hypothesis. (1967:176)

My own data (Hooker, 2007) collected previously from older *second* language learners suggest that not only are adult learners positive about the effect of their age and/or later uptake of a language, but also that there are several issues in Lenneberg's statement which resonate strongly for them. These can be interpreted constructively and used in turn to influence the design of suitable language learning programmes, namely that:

- There is a need for a 'conscious and labored *effort*' in language learning;
- Automatic acquisition from *mere exposure* to a given language does seem to 'disappear' after a certain age, necessitating an appropriate tailoring of linguistic input;
- There is a need for explicit *instruction*;
- It is difficult for a later learner to dispel a *foreign accent*;
- It is possible for a person over the age of forty to be able to *communicate* in a foreign language. (Hooker, 2007)

It is encouraging that the above findings also seem to indicate that most of these ESOL learners do not perceive themselves as unduly disadvantaged by either their advanced biological age, or by a late start to SLL.

Positive perceptions of older learners regarding the effect of their chronological age (i.e. being over 40 years) upon their learning are also reinforced in Bellingham's study (2004).

2.2.3 Quantification

Nevertheless, it is clear that whatever view is taken on the rather controversial CPH, SLA researchers have outlined what learners and educators may reasonably *expect* in terms of potential for 'successful' language learning in adulthood. Such 'success' has been measured and identified in terms of skills; competence; or attainment. 'Successful learning' has tended to have been quantified methodologically by discrete language tasks or experiments, or even in the laboratory (de Keyser, 2000).

A further problem with this, as Bialystok notes (1998:504) is that there is no objective definition of language proficiency to allow researchers or practitioners to state the nature of participants'/learners' *competence*. She writes that linguists need a way of 'organizing this multiplicity of language skills and characteristics into a coherent statement about the human potential to learn

and use language' (*op. cit.* 502). If you are going to measure something you need a reliable yardstick.

However, what appears to have been neglected is how *learners themselves* perceive the effects of participation in language learning, and what they deem to be successful or beneficial.

'Success' and 'benefits' must be understood in a much broader sense than by just assessing the learner's command of linguistic structures or skills, e.g. through awarding qualifications. LLLs do not go to evening classes to obtain qualifications; this option is mostly unavailable. They go for a whole gamut of different reasons. The aim of my research is to understand this experience; what it means to the learners; what motivates them to keep attending classes and what they derive from this.

However, epistemology and methodology are also relevant, because generally in psycholinguistic research, measurement of learners' potential and competence has often been investigated by relating the learner as an *object* to the linguistic task, exercise or structure. This fails to recognise each learner's individuality and agency, or indeed any *consciousness* of mental activity, effecting behaviour (Roebuck, 2000).

2.3 The psychological/ cognitive dimension

The fact remains that adult learners may differ in the evaluation and perceptions of 'successful' learning from the 'success' proposed by educators or researchers. With this, the SLA debate moves on from a study of the linguistic systems and processing *per se* to more psycholinguistic concepts affecting the person. This includes concepts such as: motivation; self-concept (Williams and Burden, 1997); self-worth (Covington, 1992) or self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). This leads to more of a research emphasis on cognition and the psyche, rather than just upon brain structure and linguistic systems and the language itself.

2.3.1 Linking neurological/cognitive theory to practice

At the same time there have been notable developments in the approach to neuro-linguistic concerns in the fifty years or so since Lenneberg first published his work. There have been considerable advances in the assigning of specific cognitive functions to brain structures and a greater understanding of cognitive development (Taylor, 2006) helped by more advanced technology, for example, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) imaging equipment to identify activated regions of the brain (Bialystok, 1998). In addition, there have been recent moves to understand more about how brain anatomy functions together with cognitive elements. This not only has had an impact upon knowledge about ageing and language in a general sense, but also as *applied* to education and language learning, taking it beyond theory to practice (Wattendorf and Festman, 2008; Savundranayagam and Bouchard Ryan, 2008).

However there is a critical issue in making a direct link from neurological aspects of linguistic theory to educational practice. Findings from Kim *et al.* (1997) suggest that first language (L1) and second language (L2) language production are found to be produced in different areas of the brain. Referring to this latter study, Snow (in Marinova Todd *et al.*, 2000:16) comments that, 'the real question about age differences in brain localization is whether it implies anything about behaviour or about critical periods'. She continues that, although it is generally accepted by psycholinguists that a critical period for L1 acquisition exists, the more controversial views arise when the critical period claim is applied also to the *learning* of an L2.

Furthermore in this same study the 'glamour of brain science' (*op. cit.* 14) is disparaged and it is claimed that this and the apparent 'concrete nature of neuro-physiological studies' (*ibid*), sometimes results in an uncritical public acceptance of some research findings. It also gives rise to an over-dependence on neuroscience by some researchers hoping to find new and conclusive evidence for constructing a more coherent and widely-accepted theory of SLA. As such, Marinova-Todd *et al.* (*op. cit.*) point out that for some neuro-scientific studies there may be other more plausible interpretations for different language-processing patterns in adult brains amongst early and late starters (Weber-Fox and Neville, 1996). Study results in this area may simply suggest that:

- Adult learners use their 'hypothetic-deductive logic' to treat L2 learning as a problem to be solved (Rosansky, 1975);
- Adults seem to have a degree of conscious awareness of language structure (Ioup, 1995);
- Adults are 'better able to attend to grammatical anomalies than are children' (Marinova Todd *et al*, 2000:17).

This takes into account Piaget's proposal (1959) that meta-cognition and the awareness of the mechanics of learning processes is more prevalent in adults. Adopting this Piagetian concept of normal cognitive development as being linear and progressive, it is easy to appreciate that adults may indeed be more capable of recognising not only *what* or *how* they prefer to learn, but also what they find most useful. Furthermore Bialystok posits that: with regards to the structures of brain-world interactions, there is a predominance of 'world-to-brain' transactions' in childhood and that as one ages the reverse is true: 'brain-to-world' (Bialystok and Craik, 2006:7). She further describes how, as well as being responsible for mental processes and behaviours, the developing brain is itself 'shaped and molded by specified circumstances, experiences, successes and failures' (Bialystok, *ibid*).

Already the argument is beginning to crystallise for considering social and environmental factors, such as: the learning context/setting; the learner's language learning history and socio-cultural background. Adults have accrued knowledge, experience, values and beliefs and use this as their framework for interacting with the learning and the world at large.

2.3.2 Explicit instruction

The first factor to consider in a social approach to SLL is that of the *social* dimension of the learning situation, especially that offered by instruction.

Mitchell and Myles (2004) assert that SLL and SLA theory to date have both been dominated by linguistic and psycholinguistic approaches. For example it has been argued that merely providing unmediated linguistic 'comprehensible *input*' (Krashen and Terrell, 1983) may be sufficient for SLA to take place.

Equally Swain (1985, 1995) has developed the '*output* hypothesis': i.e. that to practise the second language is necessary to increase fluency. These theories

purport that, according to your viewpoint, all you need to do is either hear a language or practise it to become fluent. In the light of Lenneberg's (1967) claim that *instruction* is important for adult learners, given their ever-diminishing predisposition towards SLA from 'mere exposure', the case with adults for 'mediation' (i.e. intervention from a more competent other) and social interaction strengthens.

Georgette loup (1995) has investigated the importance of instruction in adult SLA. She explains that adult language learning tends to include 'some degree of formal instruction and error correction' (*ibid*: 95). She claims that children's mental systems are still being formed in their L1 so they tend to rely on the primary linguistic data supplied in *unmodified input* to build their grammars. This informs them what is *possible* in a sentence, referred to as 'positive evidence'. Adults, on the other hand, have the mental systems of their own L1 firmly in place, so they rely more on 'negative evidence', i.e. what is *not possible*. This is supplied by explicit corrective feedback, provided normally by instruction. They benefit from the *enhanced input* provided through feedback, error correction, grammar explanations and affective interactions such as praise or acknowledgement. Doughty, too, concludes that, for SLA, 'instruction is necessary to compensate for developmental changes that put adults at a cognitive disadvantage' (Doughty and Long, 2003:256-310).

De Keyser's research (2000) further supports the notion that compensations can be made through *explicit* grammar instruction for older learners. This is built upon the premise that it is the innate mechanisms for *implicit* language acquisition that deteriorate through ageing. De Keyser suggests that it is possible to compensate for age-related deficiencies through developing adult learners' *explicit* and problem-solving learning mechanisms, e.g. through instruction. This has been influenced by Bley-Vroman's 'fundamental difference hypothesis' (1988), implying that adult SLL/SLA is not necessarily *deficient*, it just needs to be addressed with different strategies, for the reasons previously described.

However, this is confounded by recent research (Paradis, 2004) suggesting that *explicit memory*: the mental mechanism of acquiring an L2, or even L3, is

quicker to decline than *implicit memory* in ageing. A person's L1 is acquired implicitly and naturalistically in childhood. This implies that as well as adults needing explicit means in order to learn an L2, they will also have to work hard to *retain* any linguistic information.

With this in mind SLA research still appears to emphasise a view of instruction as a transmission exercise, focusing more on pedagogical moves and the transferral of linguistic structures to learners, rather than seeing instruction as a socially-constructed and mediated activity, taking into account the learner's agency; 'investment' (Norton, 2001) and attitude towards the learning.

Nevertheless looking at 'instruction' does move the search for knowledge about adult language learning forward, from an approach of just relating SLA to the structure and functions of the brain: stressing abstract linguistic notions such as language 'proficiency' or 'competence'. It moves the understanding towards the cognitive perspective regarding how individual minds perceive and process language. It privileges a view of SLL as being an integral part of the whole complex system of mental processing, which also includes such constructs as affect, emotions or memory.

Moving on from merely considering the biological/neurological changes and the developmental deficiencies of ageing, it is possible to consider the notion that 'younger is *not* better, only *different*', regarding SLA and SLL.

2.3.3 Lifespan cognition

Selected research on 'lifespan cognition' from Bialystok and Craik's volume on the subject (2006) was reviewed in an earlier study (Hooker, 2007:13). Several examples of the impact of ageing upon cognition are identified, pertaining to adults' mental processes, e.g. second language learning:

These include the prevalence of a decline in focus; working memory and working attention in cognitive tasks amongst older adults (Baddeley, 1993; Hasher, Zacks and May, 1999). This is due to the '*inhibitory processing*' in cognition becoming less efficient through ageing. Inhibition filters out interference, e.g. 'irrelevant thoughts, personal preoccupations and idiosyncratic

associations' (Kemper, 2006) effecting the mental processing required for text encoding and retrieval.

This is supported by empirical findings (Hooker, 2007:31). In this study, participants in their 50s gave interview accounts of problems with focus, attention and memory, when learning ESOL.

There are implications from these findings for those educators prepared to consider the cognitive effects of SLL upon learners. As such it could allow a deeper understanding of which tasks, classroom activities or approaches might be effective for adult learners, if the measurement is to be the *success* of the task, or linguistic progress. However, it still does not take into account the learner's own *consciousness* of success, or the impact of SLL upon learners as people. Nor does it describe any wider social benefits of learning an additional language.

2.4 Beyond linguistic/ SLA theory

2.4.1 *The social approach*

I concur with Phipps (2007:2) who advocates a different way of thinking regarding language teaching. She recommends that we should not simply 'rehearse the commonplaces of language pedagogy', which requires 'a shift away from the discourses of performance and competency and skills' (*ibid*).

This entails going beyond the linguistic systems and the brains and psyches of individual learners to considering how learners react to others socially, both within the classroom and beyond.

In doing so it is necessary to explore what Block (2003) refers to as 'the *social* turn in second language acquisition' (my italics), and explore the research focusing on learners' accounts of their learning.

Block (*ibid.*) writes of the developments that have been made over the past two decades in research foregrounding learners' own accounts of their experiences (e.g. Benson and Nunan, 2004; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2001; Pavlenko, 2001a).

Such research gives rich and textured pictures of learners' autobiographies and life histories. This has mainly been through what Cotterall (2004) calls 'privileged access', i.e. by means of methods such as diaries or interviews.

Block (*op. cit.*:131) suggests that an interest in personal narrative is not new as earlier studies referred to diaries kept by applied linguists, who were also active language learners (e.g. Bailey,1983; Schmidt and Frota,1986). However Block suggests that more recent research in this vein has been informed more by social theory than applied linguistics: involving 'a shift from seeing outcomes of encounters with languages only in linguistic or meta-cognitive terms to seeing them in socio-historical terms'(*ibid.*:131). According to Block this might mean a change from focusing on 'the acquisition of morphemes' to what learners do to negotiate their cultural and social identities in the communities of practice in which they wish to participate (*ibid.*), as in Goldstein (1996, 2001) and Norton (1995,1997, 2000, 2001).

Lantolf (2001a, 2001b) has explored accounts of what he calls: 'language learning memoirs'. In his research his L2 learning stories were mostly collected from learners' written accounts, but also through conducting interviews. His colleague, Aneta Pavlenko, writes of these:

It is possible that only personal narratives can provide a glimpse into areas so private, personal, and intimate that they are rarely –if ever- broached in the study of SLA, and they are at the same time, at the heart and soul of the second language socialization process.' (2001b:167)

Both Pavlenko, and Lantolf (2000:159), whose work has concentrated upon on a socio-cultural approach to SLA, are clear about where narrative approaches to SLA research should be positioned. They do not argue for replacing observational/ experimental research with personal narratives, but claim that certain aspects of human activity, including SLA, can be 'brought to the surface' (*ibid*) with the deeper probing that personal narratives allow.

For this it is necessary to draw on learners' own perceptions of their language learning and the meaning of the experiences related to it: the 'lived meanings' (van Manen, 1997:183). This necessitates looking at other ways of accessing an authentic representation of learners' experiences.

Kramer and Kray (2006) have pointed out that neither the decline of cognition nor brain structure is uniform across the adult lifespan. This suggests that determining learning potential according to people's biological age and relating it solely to neurological/cognitive development, and as universal in all learners may be flawed and one-dimensional. There are just too many other factors at play: socio-cultural factors, e.g. learners' ethnic, cultural, educational and social backgrounds.

These have to date played little part in research agendas regarding adult language learning. However, I believe that these socio-cultural elements should be interpreted in an *implicit* way for this qualitative study, rather than making such factors explicit in a factor analysis study: more redolent of the quantitative paradigm.

As early as 1983, Larsen-Freeman had argued that the SLA process should not be viewed as a unilateral process whereby the learner is seen as 'merely a passive recipient of customized native speaker input' (2001:12). Later in 1991 she concluded that the case for age-related effects in SLA was evidentially unsound: calling for more ethnographic research taking social context into account. In further research (2001) Larsen-Freeman highlighted that the majority of SLA research up to the end of the 1990s had been largely experimental, investigating SLA and its related processes from biological or cognitive perspectives, without due heed to how they are socially constructed and experienced by learners. Larsen-Freeman makes the case for increased recognition of learner differences and individual contributions by exploring not only 'how much they succeed, but what they do to meet with success' (2001:13). I believe that further questions need to be asked; such as that of: how learners define 'success' in LLL, and what it means to them. Larsen-Freeman defines learner 'contributions' by framing them as:

- what learners bring, that is who they are (*attributes*: age, aptitude, personality, learning disabilities, social identities);
- how they conceptualize second language acquisition (*conceptualization*: motivation, attitude, cognitive style, beliefs); and
- what they do (*actions*: learning strategies) (2001:13).

In her empirical study Bellingham (2004) considers the issue of the learning potential of older learners (aged 40+) relating it to learners' beliefs and the

contexts of their learning, i.e. learning both naturalistically and institutionally. She answers Larsen-Freeman's call for a more ethnographic approach, by using case studies to investigate the 'contemporary phenomenon [i.e. learning another language later in life] within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear' (Yin, 1994:13).

With Bellingham's accounts of learners' life-stories one comes closer to understanding what it is that older learners are experiencing when learning another language. One finding is that 'time' can be both an asset and a precious resource for the older learner and also that, in their own words, that one "is never too old to learn English – so for all old people it is useful". (Bellingham, *ibid*:63). Bellingham makes the case that there is indeed language acquisition after 40 years of age by exploring students' histories and how they perceive themselves as learners.

However the pendulum may have swung too far the other way. Block claims that although analysing language learning stories may highlight interesting social or contextual issues in SLA, it 'leaves the linguistic side of SLA completely marginalised' (2003:133). Added to which, according to Mitchell and Myles (1998:188-9) focusing on learners' accounts in SLL, especially through case studies of individuals and learner groups, involves paying attention to the personal qualities of the learner, along with her/his own *social* contribution. This, they allege, may mean a lack of attention to being paid to the linguistic detail of the learning process (*ibid.*)

A research area linking this investigation and the learner back to language is presented by the psycholinguistic concept of 'motivation', i.e. why learn another language.

2.4.2 Reasons and motivation for language learning

Traditionally linguistic motivational studies have been quantitative and psychometric. Seminal writers in the field of linguistics investigating motivation such as Robert Gardner and his colleagues (e.g. Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Masgoret and Gardner, 2003) have used large cohorts of respondents to define fixed categories of motivation. Gardner (1985) even devised a formal

instrument to categorise and measure 19 different subscales of motivation: the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB).

However the '*initial* motivation' for starting to learn another language and the perceived '*benefits*' having undertaken such activity, could be seen as lying at the opposite ends of the continuum of the motivational process. Dörnyei's and Ottó's dynamic 'process model' (1998) positions 'initial motivation' at the beginning: the '*pre-actional phase*' (*ibid*: 85), and evaluation (e.g. of perceived benefits) occurring at the end in the reflective '*post-actional phase*' (*ibid*:85), after the 'action', i.e. learning, has been undertaken. This last stage, the '*post-actional*' phase could be viewed as the evaluative point at which the learner decides about future learning plans and reflects upon past learning. Some motivational research investigates *why* learners might be inspired to learn, and *what* they consequently 'do' or might do with these language skills, emphasising the wide spectrum of motives for studying an additional language.

One example concerns a study involving *young* adults, led by Angela Gallagher-Brett (2004) for the UK Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS). This enquiry (*ibid.*) identified 700 official 'reasons' or 'rationales' for studying a language, classified in taxonomy. Data were collected from questionnaires and focus groups involving students aged 16-19, in post-compulsory education.

The LLAS study lends strength to the promotion of language learning generally, as well as helping to 'inform public opinion of the benefits of language learning' (*ibid*:4). It builds upon an earlier report, where the authors recommended that 'rationales for studying languages should be collected and classified' (Kelly and Jones, 2003:35). However, the overall taxonomy of reasons: extrinsic motives for studying another language appear to respond largely to instrumentality, market forces and competition.

They include some of the following reasons: 'citizenship'; 'communication'; 'employability'; 'intercultural competence'; 'personal and social development of the individual and values'. Rationale classifications such as: 'globalisation'; 'democracy'; or 'international dimension' all seem to be rather abstract and

pragmatically-orientated. The report appears to reflect young adults' opinions, beliefs and expectations of what they *expect* or *imagine* to derive from learning a language, rather than what they have actually experienced. I believe that these constructs have different dimensions of meaning to respondents and would benefit from further qualitative exploration.

Nevertheless this research does conclude that some of the strongest reasons to study languages are the 'personal benefits and enjoyment that people gain from learning a language' (Gallagher Brett *et al*, 2004:2). These 'personal benefits' associated with language learning include 'communication, travel and employability' (*ibid*: 5) which tends to highlight once more the functional dimension of young adults' language study.

Providing a different contextual perspective of adult learning, Aldridge's and Tuckett's 2009 report focuses upon narrowing nationwide adult participation in community (ACE) and further education (FE), rather than solely upon young adults in higher education (HE). This research reports upon participation in England in foreign language learning (FLL) i.e. languages other than English except Welsh. It suggests that respondents are motivated to study foreign languages in these FE/ ACE contexts mainly for reasons connected with 'interest' or 'personal development', rather than for more instrumental reasons.

The two most prevalent *benefits* identified for current or recent (in the past three years) learners in these FE/ ACE contexts were given as: 'my communication skills have improved' or as 'I have met new people/made new friends'. However the figures are slightly misleading as they have been drawn from a larger cohort of 4,917 adults (aged between 17 and 75+) answering questions about their *general* participation in learning, not about FLL specifically.

This latter report gives useful information to both learning-providers and policy-makers needing to plan and justify adult (i.e. post-16) learning programmes. It is also arguable that researchers can use these findings as a starting point for further, qualitative enquiry. However, from a teacher's perspective, I believe that such research does not lead towards an informed view of how to work towards 'best practice'. For this it helps to know what the learner understands or means

by 'personal development' or which particular 'communication skills' have improved.

Nevertheless there is a growing appreciation in motivational research of the fluidity and dynamism of the construct of 'motivation' (Dörnyei and Ottó, 1998; Syed, 2001). It changes with shifts in circumstances or mental states, and is triggered by specific events. The word 'motivation' (from the Latin, *motivus*, 'moving') is not a static construct. Motivation may be defined in terms of not being a cause or product of learning experiences, or as observable measurable activity, 'but rather in terms of what patterns of thinking and belief underlie such activity and shape students' engagement in the learning process' (Syed, 2001). 'Purpose' may be construed as a type of *blanket* motivation, related to members in a specific context or group, such as SLL/FLL for *specific* purposes, e.g. for law or *leisure* purposes, as in this present study.

Moreover individual motivation to learn can also be effected by '*significant others*' within the individual learner's life, e.g. friends and family. As such, although motivation is generally considered a psychological construct, it is also social in nature.

Shoaib's and Dörnyei's (2004) study of young adult learners' motivational changes over time suggests how 'significant others', can influence motivation to learn a language. It also shows how motivation 'matures' over time and may lead to an increased engagement with language learning with the passing of time and increasing maturity. This conceptualises 'age' not as a linear developmental progression in the Piagetian (1959) sense, but as a variable and unique process dependent upon many personal and circumstantial factors.

This social and motivational dimension is demonstrated in a mixed-method, small-scale study (Hooker, 2008) of *de*-motivational influences amongst older English-speakers at LLL classes in the UK. The questionnaire findings suggest that respondents are resoundingly resistant to *de*-motivation. They not only appear to mostly find their age (mean=66 years) unproblematic, but also that the social aspects of their language learning, such as 'fun' and 'being with and chatting to other learners' are highly-valued.

Interpretative interviews in the same study (*ibid*) further confirm just how complex motivation, combined with the dynamics of learning with others, is for adults. For example, the participants commented that by comparing their performance with others they either were motivated to learn from classroom peers, or they felt *de*-motivated by others who seemed more competent or who “showed-off”. The interview findings also showed that adult learners were motivated to attend LLL classes for diverse reasons: e.g. to keep mentally-stimulated; or as a distraction from personal bereavement. In-depth interviews asking learners to describe the reasons ‘*why*’ they feel inclined to continue to learn another language take the discussion of motivation beyond a list of motivational categories, to understanding the true import, and meaning of LLL to the learners themselves.

It allows for a better understanding of what it is that learners are deriving from LLL throughout the learning process, i.e. initiating, maintaining, and evaluating activity. Post-learning evaluation involves learners’ own perceptions of: ‘*what it is like*’ and what personal transformations or advantages they perceive as a result. Equally it highlights factors that are detrimental to a learner’s progress or wellbeing.

However, it is necessary not to take learners’ stated reasons for their participation in language learning at face value, as motivation is much more intricate than can be simply categorised in a ‘tick-box’ listing.

2.4.3 Conceptualising ‘context’

Individual adult learners’ motivation and agency regarding learning an additional language are often bound together in certain formulations in different educational settings.

For example, on the one hand, learning a *second* language for living in a new country (i.e. in an ESOL class) immediately evokes the instrumental purpose of learning a language for survival: e.g. for qualifications or a job, and is often *mandatory*.

On the other hand, however, choosing to learn a *foreign* language (e.g. French in a LLL class) is often for myriad other reasons. Living in a country such as England, when one's own language, English, is dominant globally, entails leisure language learning being a choice made of one's own *volition*, and involves strong *intrinsic* motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Following Candlin, I agree that:

language learning and teaching, like language itself, is always a social and cultural act and is always the product of socially situated participants who operate with varying degrees of licensed choice in particular settings, and are constrained by specific structurings of power, by particular distributions of knowledge and by their own individual investments of energy or commitment (Candlin, in Breen, 2001:xvi)

Candlin (*ibid*) writes further about the importance of 'context' to language-learning by considering how the term 'context' is interpreted. He observes that 'context' may be seen as a 'configuration of information that people use for making sense of language in particular contexts' (*ibid*: xvi), often through classroom talk.

Alternatively Candlin notes that 'context' may be seen as more dynamic and tied to the social activity and relations between different interlocutors present in particular communicative events. This may change and evolve as the text or discourse proceeds. These individual 'event-bound' contexts (either physical or discursive) are the ones in which language learners find themselves when they practise their language skills in the wider world.

However, there is also the view that 'context' is not 'event-bound' or 'language-bound', but may be seen as a 'frame' in which the communicative event is embedded, with other phenomena such as 'cultural setting, speech situation and shared background assumptions' (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992:3) being taken into account. This comes closest to providing an explanation for the significance of the '*leisure* language learning' 'context' in which the participants in this present study are located. The particular institutional or social 'setting' may however differ for learners in varying situations. The context of LLL is one of a localised 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991): using an anthropological framework to describe the learning and the social situation which it is situated. For example, this is whereby LLLs belong as members to a

certain learning community with certain normative behaviour and social-institutional and 'broader organisational conditions' (Gee, 1999). Phipps' term of 'tourist language learners' (2007), i.e. people learning a language mainly for tourism purposes, captures this, i.e. the social nature of adults learning because they want to: bound as they are by a joint sense of purpose and context.

2.4.4 Incorporating social factors

The social perspective is evident in several antecedent studies which have gone beyond a view of SLL as a) knowledge transmission; b) as an objectified activity involving learners as recipients of linguistic input, or c) as measuring 'successful' SLA/SLL by experimentation or observation. This incorporates the study of a learner's sense of self and identity.

Norton (2000) uses five case studies of immigrant women learning French as a *second* language in Canada, to explore the social context and interactions of her participants. These are applicable not only in learners' formal classroom learning but also in learners' acquisition of the language in situations beyond this. Norton conceptualises the 'investment' that learners make in their SLA and some of the perceivable gains that they make by drawing on their social networks and resources to expand affiliation to their peers.

Norton clarifies this further,

The notion of investment...conceives of the language learner as having complex social history and desires. The notion presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with language speakers, but they are constantly organising and reorganising a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in the learner's own identity, which is constantly changing across time and space (2000:374)

Block (1998) charts the individual experience of a single adult language learner at an English language school in Spain, relating it to his subject's ongoing evaluation of and reaction to the unfolding language course. Block's study focuses on the direct impact of particular structured *tasks and activities* in a specific setting, rather than the *overall impact* of language learning *per se* upon the learner.

2.4.5 *The multilingual subject*

Kramsch (2009) highlights a new turn in multilingual identities and subjectivities. She moves away from traditional SLA research, which she sees as having given more attention to the processes of acquisition, often separating learners' minds, bodies, and social behaviours into separate domains of enquiry, rather than considering the 'flesh-and-blood individuals who are doing the learning' (*ibid.*:2).

Kramsch explores the *subjective* aspects of language-learning experiences, rather than focusing on the supposed ideal in SLA: 'the stable, objectively verifiable reality' (*ibid.*:27) of the native-speaker of the target language. In this work she analyses data gathered from published testimonies and language memoirs of former language learners; spoken and written data from American college language learners, and online data from language learners in electronic chat rooms and text messaging exchanges. In doing so she stresses the importance of looking in richer detail at the lived experiences of *multiple* language learners/users. Furthermore she makes a clear distinction between the reality of the monolingual person and that of the multilingual learner/user, exposing some of the limitations of viewing a monolingual reality as being ideal or 'successful' for the multilingual subject. She writes of how the multilingual subjects in her research:

occupy an embodied, socially and culturally inflected third place in language filled with memories of other languages and fantasies of other identities. In its referential and mythic dimensions, language performs and creates subjectivities that these multilingual speakers use to conjure alternative worlds. (2006:97)

Kramsch adopts an ecological perspective here towards the term 'intersubjectivity' (here between individuals, languages or cultures). Her approach merges discourse analysis and ethnomethodology on the one hand with post-structuralist feminist linguistics on the other (2009:18-19). She explains (*ibid.*) that for ethnomethodologists socialisation occurs where social interaction and intersubjectivity may be created by an 'intersubjective pool of shared knowledge' (Wells, 1981:53), and by using 'socially shared symbols' (Tomasello, 1999:106), e.g. those presented by language. For discourse analysts 'intersubjectivity' is viewed as 'the basis of how participants orient to one another and to the here-and-now context of an interaction' (Kramsch, 2009:19). For post-structural scholars, she continues, subjectivity is produced

discursively through 'the symbols we create, the chains of signification we construct and the meanings we exchange with others' (*ibid.*). Additionally Kramsch maintains that this 'intersubjectivity' is not only found in the 'here-and-now', but also 'in the shared memories, connotations, projections, inferences elicited by the various sign systems we use in concert with others' (*ibid.*:20). Consequently this post-structuralist approach means that 'intersubjectivity' is synonymous with 'intertextuality': i.e. the fact that any chunk of discourse (or text) may be considered and interwoven with other discourses at any point in time or place. On a practical level this means that it is possible to consider people's memories and future imaginings, as their 'response' to any utterances in any ongoing present discourse, and that what a person says, is not necessarily a reply to a previous speaker's utterance in a given interaction.

As well as offering methodological alternatives, Kramsch also highlights some key issues, which have an impact upon the *young* multilingual subjects in her book, and which are relevant to their personal meaning-making and any construed 'benefits' of language learning.

Firstly she writes of 'perception and desire'. She gives several definitions of 'desire' as it affect language learners:

- i) 'a need for identification with the Other ...such as a native speaker or another image of oneself';
 - ii) 'the urge to escape from a tedious state of conformity with one's present environment to a state of plenitude and enhanced power';
 - iii) 'the drive for "subjectivation", that is, the construction of an "inwardly generated identity", a quest for a horizon of significance larger than the self;
 - iv) 'the need for a language that is not only an instrumental means of communication, or a means of identification with some native speaker, but a way of generating an identity for themselves, of finding personal significance through explicit attention to articulation and meaning.'
- (2009:14-15)

Secondly Kramsch refers to 'playfulness', through learners' manipulation of the different semiotic and symbolic systems, i.e. languages, for their own purposes. She writes of 'symbolic power' (*ibid.*:8-13). She describes how these *young adult and adolescent* multilingual subjects are constantly negotiating their identities, pushing the boundaries as they encounter and venture into the wider world i.e. that of further study, work and travel. To do so 'intersubjectively', the data suggests that the students manipulate and experiment with their linguistic

resources (other languages and their own) and their technological resources (the computer/mobile telephones) for their own end: to create the identities, *personae*, ways of being, and circumstances that they 'desire' or imagine.

Thirdly Kramsch has touched upon the *physical* nature of language learning. In her 1998 study of nearly a thousand undergraduate students at the University of California at Berkeley, she explored the range of language learning experiences by asking students for metaphors to describe their experiences of learning a foreign language. This resulted in over 1496 different metaphors, for example:

learning a language is like....'scaling a barbed wire fence'; 'kissing a new girlfriend'; 'eating popcorn- once you've had one kernel you reach for another'; [or] 'swimming in mud and watching it turn into water'. (Kramsch, 2009:58-65)

Kramsch points to the 'self-centredness' and 'physicality' present in these metaphors, describing the conditions for this particular language learning context. She explains that:

Learning a foreign language makes these students more conscious of their bodies (emotions, feelings, appearance, memories, fantasies) and of the language's body (its sounds, tastes, shapes and forms)....The metaphors they generated reflect the world of young Northern Californians, who over the weekend, may surf the waves, or drive cars....along the cliffs where they may windsurf or han[g] glide. (*ibid*: 66)

Such studies as this and those given in section 2.4.4 often tend to consider the contexts of higher, further or compulsory education or the experiences of immigrants learning a *second* language in their adopted country. Contextual or circumstantial differences, as well as varying learner attributes shape the type of learning experience that people may have. However to build a more comprehensive picture specifically of adult learning of a *foreign* language in community settings, it is necessary to draw on studies which are more complementary to this current thesis in terms of the learning settings and learner attributes.

2.5 Tourist language learners

Phipps's research (2007) extends the enquiry about the learning of a *foreign* language *of one's own volition* and *as an adult* to incorporate some of the motivational and contextual characteristics of my study. For example, Phipps's

work describes the phenomenon of adults voluntarily acquiring language skills in circumstances where the learning is somewhat against the odds and that the learning will not necessarily be used to any great extent, representing *learning for learning's sake*. She conceptualises this as 'tourist language learning' (TLL) because the dominant motivation for learning an additional language in her research context tends to be mainly for *tourism* purposes.

Some of the language learning experiences she describes, both as an observer and as a participant, take place in a 'learn-abroad' setting (e.g. learning Portuguese whilst in Portugal). She explores the paradox of why such 'tourist language learners' (TLLs) should 'bother' (2007:16) with spending the large amounts of time and energy commonly found in TLL classes, when the opportunities to interact further with the language are so limited: as in the case of British learners, learning a foreign language at a distance from where it is spoken regularly and everyday.

She has developed a term to refer to the actual use and communicative application of language learning: 'languaging' (Phipps, 2007; Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004). This encapsulates 'the full, embodied and engaged interaction with the world that comes when we put the languages we are learning into action' (Phipps, 2007:12).

I have drawn considerably on Phipps's 2007 work because it resonates strongly for me, in reflecting the nature of language learning from the leisure learner's perspective. Phipps also captures the sense of the general and the individual purpose, as well as the free choice made by this type of learner. She describes the time: 'cherished leisure time', and care, which TLLs dedicate to, 'the long arduous process of learning to relate to other people and places in their language' (2007:89).

Many of the fellow learners in the classes Phipps has attended are older: in their middle or later years and with intrinsic reasons for learning a language which extend beyond attaining a specific competence level or acquiring qualifications. The connection between Phipps's TLLs and the LLLs in my research is clear; as tourists may be classified as 'temporarily leisured people'

(Bauman,1996).The term 'leisure' (from the Latin: '*licere*', meaning to 'allow') captures some of the essence of volition and agency present in adult language learning, when motivated by an *intrinsic* desire to learn a language for its own sake.

Phipps's anthropological approach positions these TLLs as a definable cultural group: even though are disparate in their individual backgrounds.

The tourist language learners I joined are ordinary people – a levelled out group from a wide and improbable range of social and cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They are bound by what they know they do not know – the particular language; by a love of things they believe to be found through that language but which they do not have in any tangible way; by their different yet paradoxical set of imaginings that prompt them to learn a language. (2007:158)

The 'setting of the scene' in Phipps's work has influenced my own study on two levels:

Firstly Phipps has described some general characteristics of the 'lived meanings' (van Manen,1997) of TLL together with the inherent 'grand narratives' (Lyotard,1979) concerning language learning in general.

Secondly, Phipps's research participants, and Phipps, herself, with her observations as a fellow learner, have recounted either language learning or 'linguaging' events which have been personally significant to them. This is something which, drawing upon Koshar (2000), Phipps refers to as the 'small-scale stories' (*op. cit.*:13) or the 'smaller pictures' (*op. cit.*:27). It is here that the substantive meaning of language learning for older learners and what it 'does' for them in terms of *benefits* can be identified.

2.5.1 Vital and positive

Focusing on the nature of the phenomenon of 'TLL' through exploring the language learning experiences themselves, Phipps places primary emphasis on what she calls the 'quick' of tourists learning languages. 'Quick', she explains, is 'an old English word used to refer to vibrancy and to anything characterised by the presence of life' (2007:1). Nie (2000:7) too, in his phenomenological study of teaching ESL in Canada, refers to the 'liveliness of human interaction'.

Phipps's affirmative take on adult language learning reflects the commitment,

and liveliness, which, in my own experience, are commonly found in these types of classes. Regarding tourist language learning specifically, Phipps explains that holidays, through tourism, offer ‘refreshment, renewal and revitalisation’ (*op. cit.*:1).

This positivity also emanates from McClusky’s premise, in his seminal writings on adult learning, that education is ‘essentially an affirmative enterprise’ (1973:2) for adults, leading to something enhancing, at whatever life-stage.

A positive framing of adult *foreign* language learning is a far cry from the deficit SLA models, or the limitations of the ‘younger is better’ mantra in language pedagogy. It is also distant from the motivation for *second* language learning, where there often appears to be an in-built, *instrumental* rationale for undertaking the learning of another language, e.g. for bureaucratic or vocational purposes. The effectiveness of SLL is often measurable by either performance or formal assessment criteria. For example, English at ESOL Entry-Level 3 is required for eligibility for British citizenship.

This thesis is not the place for comparing the learning of a *second* language to learning a *foreign* language. Nevertheless, it is clear that if one needs to learn a *second* language for everyday survival whilst living in another country there is a dimension of pressure and utility. This tends to be absent in the tourist’s more relaxed life. Phipps points out that the learners in the classes where she has learnt foreign languages besides English, i.e. in adult TLL classes, do not attend and enrol in formal language classes:

because they are going to “get better jobs” or “have better prospects” or serve the travel industry or any of the functionalist, technicist reasons that we may generate as reasons for learning another language. (2007:88-89)

Furthermore she queries the remarkable disparaging of TLL, given the current crisis in the UK within the modern foreign language (MFL) teaching profession, where the uptake for language degree-courses is in decline. At the same time she highlights the larger number of people who attend classes in adult and community education in order to be able to use a language on holiday (*ibid*:16).

It tends not to be the case that TLLs explore ‘grand culture’ in great depth: through studying for example: the arts, literature or cinema, as would normally

be the case on an undergraduate language course. Phipps (*ibid*: 100) makes the distinction between the literacy dimension of learning a language in academic contexts, primarily to be able to read, write and record another language, with the '*comprehension-for-conversation*' nature of the TLL classroom and languaging. TLLs usually need a language to cope with basic holiday transactions, e.g. travelling about or 'ordering a coffee'. Many adult language learning syllabi are constructed around these functional exchanges (e.g. Lamping, 1998).

However some language learners may indeed delight in Italian art, French literature or German poetry. This may either be as a legacy of previous education, intellectual curiosity, or a desire for personal development, which does not have to be confined to the realm of *higher* education. However there still exists an inherent snobbery and elitism in England that 'holiday' adult FLL is somehow 'frivolous' (Kingston, 2009), or of lesser 'value' than language learning in HE settings.

Phipps (*op. cit.*) answers the charge that TLL is superficial and is merely about 'ordering a coffee' and basic conversational 'sound bites', by writing that far from being unimportant, a basic willingness to order a coffee in another language as a tourist, goes beyond perfunctory exchanges. She writes about the significant importance of both the moral and social aspects of making the effort to 'step outside one's habitual ways of speaking, to let go of one's normal fluency and linguistic power' (*ibid*: 6). She argues further that a dismissive view of tourist language learning is misplaced owing to the complex and 'embedded' nature of language. She writes,

There can be no speaking of a tourist language in which the person is not fully engaged. It is never just skills that are 'performed'. People speak – to and with each other (*op. cit.* 3-4).

2.5.2 Human relatedness

When everyday transactions are combined with everyday 'human relatedness', much satisfaction may be derived by the TLL or 'languager'. This involves successfully managing communicative events together with practising, adding to existing language for future transactions (skill-building), *as well as* building human relationships, albeit fleetingly, often with strangers. As language is situational, it is necessary to momentarily 'live' or 'dwell' in the foreign language

to get the job in hand done, as well as to experience it through all the senses and relate to other human beings. Phipps describes the considerable effort which is made in the tourist language classroom to 'make meaning nicely, to make meaning in ways which are fun, inclusive, which allow for a greeting, a meeting and an eating: the biscuits or sweets brought to class' (2007:104).

Nor is it so that all communicative language exists just for the negotiation of *meaning*, it may also be for the negotiation of solidarity, support or for 'saving face' (Aston,1993). 'Languagers' can also help out others who are having linguistic difficulties.

At the same time, Phipps drawing on the theological work of Williams (2000a; 2000b) elevates 'gratuitous speech' or conversation, often exercised without purpose and in the leisurely tourist environment to the status of 'social miracle' (Williams, 2000a:72). This is where speech is not merely used for functional or transactional reasons or to acquire material goods. Williams refers back to the time of organised pilgrimage when conversations and stories bound travellers together socially, in a way which provided 'the opportunity for suspending relationships characterised by competition, rivalry' (Williams, 2000a:68-9). This part of Phipps's argument allows a framework to consider the inclusion of a theological dimension to researching the deeper reasons as to why adult learners should seemingly *waste their time* by learning a foreign language for fleeting social encounters. This is especially the case when English is readily available as a communicative option. However, I feel that Phipps pushes this theological metaphor a little too far in conceptualising this as 'charity' (*op. cit.*: 104-105). The idea of 'courtesy' better expresses my own experiences as a learner. I do not hold with Phipps that such conversation is necessarily selfless.

Such 'phatic communion' (Malinowski,1923), or 'small talk' which serves no functional purpose, can equally provide learners with an opportunity to *showcase* the language skills that they have learnt: to *show off*. Nevertheless friends, family, host interlocutors and even other tourists can benefit from a tourist 'languager', who has some command of the language in a communicative situation. The satisfaction for the *saviour/facilitator* acting as the translator/interpreter in these circumstances is self-evident.

Phipps's linking of tourism and languages, focuses upon the 'anthropology of the guest', rather than the linguistic or commercial behaviour of the touristic host. She positions the tourist language learner as a 'virtuous, courteous guest' (*op. cit.*:87), who relates to the host community openly through language. She draws upon Ricoeur (2004) terms of 'linguistic hospitality' and tourist language learners' 'moral sense of linguistic guesting' (Phipps, *op. cit.* 87).

2.5.3 Dwelling in a language

For Phipps, this concerns what the tourist does to 'dwell' (Crouch, 2002; Heidegger, 1971; Ingold, 2000) in the tourist world and its accompanying languages to: exchange stories and make conversation, meaning and importantly, changes. Furthermore Phipps writes that there are certain assumptions to be made when considering the case of the 'virtuous, courteous guest', namely that such guests will:

- Not assume that the touristic host speaks English, or any other language;
- Make an effort with *the* language;
- Prefer that the hosts become a single monolingual entity, assumed, and even desired, to be, e.g.: monolingual Italian or monolingual Portuguese. (*op.cit.*:87)

Phipps introduces Heidegger's (1971) metaphorical concept of 'dwelling' temporarily in the language and its culture. Referring to Heidegger's (*ibid.*) observation that the Old English, and German word for building, *buan*, means to 'dwell', she draws the link between 'construction' and 'dwelling' within: i.e. *inhabiting* something, e.g. a language. Phipps (2007:12) explains further that the agency of 'languages', results in a development of dispositions for 'poetic action' in another language, which as they develop become more 'habitual' and 'durable'. She notes the link between TLL and working 'at the textures of being with a different language' (*ibid.*: 21), which involves more than adopting the words alone. As well as the idea of 'construction', this evokes the idea of: resourcefulness; improvisation and hoarding; of language and cultural information, all of which may be useful in different ways. She asserts that:

Other languages, in other people and in other places, offer a change from the routines of our everyday language and everyday lives. They offer new perspectives and new places to dwell, temporarily (2007:19)

2.5.4 Identity issues

This desire on the part of TLLs to *escape* temporarily from their lives and adopt other ways of being, or identities is one that lends itself to further empirical investigation.

The issue of 'identity' is not central to discussions regarding transformations occurring whilst learning a *foreign* language. The issues of 'integration', 'inclusion' and 'acceptance' as they relate to personal 'identity' belong more to the discourses of *second* language learning, where 'dwelling' in an additional language, as well as physically living in a different country to one's own, is much more of an enduring metaphor. However, it is possible to identify incidents; moments of exclusion or welcome inclusion during random situations or interaction for *all* types of language learners. Consequently there are certain research studies which touch upon potentially relevant themes.

Norton and Toohey (2001) emphasise the developing identities of both adult and children learning a *second* language in Canada. Both researched groups make effective use of different resources and ways to gain the approval and acceptance of their peers, as well as build *social affiliation*. These are ways which transcend language. For example, Norton cites the case of 'Eva', from Poland who gains social acceptance with her English-speaking workmates, by offering to teach them Italian and giving them much-prized information about travel destinations in Europe. This develops 'social identity'. As such, these immigrants' identities change and develop, both for them and as they are perceived by others. Identity-related changes may also be seen when the 'dwelling' in another language appears to lessen or alleviate limitations imposed by one's own first language (L1) identity.

Coffey's and Street's (2008) research explores the narratives of experiences of language learning with case studies of foreign language learners, in an HE context. One of the emerging themes is that these adult learners figure their own identities in relation to the larger 'figured worlds' of language learning. One finding that emerges from Coffey and Street's study is that two of the participants, through their L2 learning, benefit from: the prestige, the cosmopolitan persona and the possibility to escape from the biases, the

'pigeonholing' and 'social baggage' (*ibid*) that may exist within their L1 identity. Such markers of identity include an Essex accent and a lack of excitement and adventure in their regular lives.

Phipps (2007:62) refers to this opportunity to move away from preconceptions and the 'symbolic violence' (described by such notable writers as Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 1980; Giroux, 2001) that arises through ordering prejudices about people on the basis of their L1 accent and perceived opinions about their education or background. She cites the case of 'Scott' (*op. cit.*:62), who is initially self-conscious of his lack of education, Scottish working-class roots, and heavily-accented English in the class of predominantly highly-educated, middle-class linguists. However, he is able to demonstrate his confidence in the language that all the learners in the class want to experience other ways of living and being. Equally he enjoys the feeling of not being 'marked' (Trubetzkoy, 1939) in the L2, as he is in his native tongue, as well as experiencing the 'fit' of a new identity.

2.6 Identifiable benefits for TLLs

In the 'small-scale stories' that she paints of TLLs or '*linguagers*', learning/using a foreign language, Phipps offers insights from analysing her own and other learners' experiences. She describes the deeper 'benefits' and 'transformations' derived from TLL and 'linguaging', whilst actively travelling, i.e. at the point where tourism and language intersect. These lived experiences take place in a framework where the premise is that tourism and travel are both 'good' and educational for you, with the magic and enchantment of travel, having an 'ability to bring change, adventure, new perspectives and renewal [to] wearisome lives' (*op. cit.*:29).

The discourses of intercultural activity, communication and the dichotomy of the 'good' and 'bad' of tourism may be relevant here, but they do not constitute the focus of Phipps's research nor this current thesis. I concur with Phipps's criticism of various behaviour-modelling intercultural projects (e.g. Hall, 1959; 1976; 1993; Hofstede, 1996) whereby 'culture' is viewed as a 'static and

packagable commodity'. With these models standardised stereotypes of cultural and ethnic behaviour are categorised and promoted.

Fernandez explains that, 'separating the teaching of culture from language offers only a superficial experience of the target culture, because language *encodes* and *reflects* its culture' (original italics; 2007:13). She adds that without access to the target language, cultural knowledge cannot be understood in any meaningful way (Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco, 1997).

Moving away from the macro discussions of tourism or intercultural activity, Phipps moves to a localised view of intercultural communication as essentially 'the human struggle to make meaning culturally and dialectically out of relationships between people, places and praxis' (2007:19). She describes the nature of the everyday interactions of TLLs using the target language *in situ* and some of the identifiable benefits, which both she and her fellow learners perceive as deriving from this.

2.6.1 Minimising the risks by magic

There are both 'real' and 'imagined' risks to be experienced when travelling, both in an imaginary sense in the classroom and applying the language to real-life situations. To illustrate the four different types of potential risks perceived by TLLs, Phipps (*ibid*: 48) narrates an incident from her Italian class. She describes the general panic in her Italian class when the learners discover that, apart from having to learn the language for checking into a hotel, that they must also surrender their passport temporarily to the receptionist for police records. For Phipps this 'small-scale story' about giving up a passport (temporarily) to the hotel illustrates four possible types of different risk:

- *Ontological risk*: TLLs may fear that by being unable to present their papers, their legitimate status as 'tourist' may be undermined and they might not be able to prove who they say they are;
- *Epistemological risk*: TLLs may also be anxious that they may be construed as breaking the law, by being unable to complete, what is an unfamiliar practice to them;
- *Material risk*: A passport is an important personal artefact and TLLs may fear that it may be lost or stolen;
- *Affective risk*: There is also the risk that through either the loss of the passport or being unable to get a hotel room, 'the happiness and wellbeing of being on holiday could evaporate' (2007:51-52).

Phipps posits that through rehearsing the appropriate phrases in the target language, people are then able to cope and communicate in the situation she cites: minimising the risks. Learners acquire not only the *linguistic capital* defined by Bourdieu (1991), but something more fluid and flexible which Phipps terms *linguistic currency* (*op. cit.*:55) with the quality of a 'fit-for-purpose' talisman or charm to be used against perceived and imagined risk, or even danger.

Role-play in class can increase the learner's perception of control over potential risk. By practising and rehearsing 'strips of behaviour' (Schechner, 1985:36) Phipps maintains that there is 'enskillment' (Ingold, 2000), enabling learners to manage real-life situations.

With talk of 'charms' or language as a 'talisman', Phipps frames language skills, especially speaking, as having a 'magical' quality (*ibid*: 59-60) to ward off problems. She also reiterates the magic metaphor, framed slightly differently, when she writes of the 'transforming, magic effects' (*ibid*: 137) upon strangers, when she attempts to talk haltingly to them in Portuguese.

This sense of wonder and joy at speaking another language is also expressed by Professor Gregorius' in Pascal Mercier's novel, *'Night Train to Lisbon'*. Mercier encapsulates some of the more ephemeral feelings and essential poetry possible with managing another language, especially the first time when doing so 'works' in practice:

Gregorius was never to forget this scene. They were his first Portuguese words in the real world and they worked. That words could cause something in the world, make someone move or stop, laugh or cry: even as a child he had found it extraordinary and it had never stopped impressing him. How did words do that? Wasn't it like magic? (2004:43)

2.6.2 The social benefits

Nevertheless the risk of linguistic 'failure' is ever-present. There is further risk to be had in the open performance of rehearsing the language in the mostly orally-based practice of the TLL classroom. Herein lies another paradox. The learning of the language may minimise the encountered risks as outlined in the previous section. However, by speaking another language, both in the class and in the world, TLLs also 'open themselves up, in risky ways, ways that impact upon

their very sense of themselves and their understandings of the world' (Phipps, *op.cit*:98), both in the classroom and beyond.

Nevertheless, Phipps attests equally to the 'communitas' (citing Turner, 1995) 'fluidityand social bondedness' (Phipps, *op. cit*.:43) possible in these adult language classes. This tends to balance the anxiety of speaking out loud in front of others. In my own empirical study (Hooker, 2008), 80% of respondents agreed that 'being and chatting to other learners' was enjoyable for them, and that 'speaking out in class' was not a problem.

Some researchers have found that being in a group helps learners broaden their perspective, and provides emotional and psychological support, with learners referring to their group as: a 'family'; a 'band of warriors' or 'fellow strugglers' (Kegan *et al*, 2001). Through the group endeavour of 'dwelling' in the target language, what may have initially existed as fragmented individual motivation may engender a common interest in others' destinations and stories. This is where there are 'shared imaginings, shared experiences, shared memories and shared desires' (Phipps, *op. cit*.:46) returning to the notion of 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999).

These TLL classes are about enjoyment and relationships with others, and personal development rather than merely institutional objectives and assessment. Moreover, the impact is much more than affective or mental; it is also sensory and physical.

2.6.3 Sensory enjoyment

Ingold (2000:192) writes of the physical and sensory impact that travel has upon human beings: of the character afforded to the places visited, through the special sights, sounds, smells and activities that engage people and allow them to relate to the world.

This perpetuates the 'dwelling' metaphor: inhabiting a place or an experience. It points to the sensory perceptions that we acquire of places which are bound to language itself: acquired perhaps from the cinema or the TV, or from our own travels. The memories and 'music' of tourism linger on long after the experience

is gone both in our minds and in our senses (Phipps, *op. cit.*). For example, aurally; the stress of spoken Italian mostly in the middle of the word lends it an instantly recognisable musicality. It is often possible to distinguish a language merely from hearing its sound patterns, without knowing the meaning of the utterances.

After experiencing different sensations and hearing languages abroad, we may wish to bring souvenirs into our lives, e.g. food or drink. It could include an interesting word, e.g. Phipps cites '*lattuga*' ('lettuce' in Italian), which her classmate says 'sounds like a dance' (2007:88). The world and its languages may be 'brought home' (Phipps, *ibid.*:19): resulting in adopting new practices or modifying existing ones in our daily lives. English itself as a language has borrowed greatly from others, e.g. 'mosquito' from Spanish or, 'zombie' from the Kongo language (Hitchings, 2008).

Phipps claims further that learning a language can alter the way that learners think or see the world. For example she describes the way in which TLLs struggle with mouthing the unfamiliar words they need to express themselves in a comprehensible way: inhabiting the new language with their 'whole person' (*op.cit.*:58). Phipps (*op. cit.*) theorises this by referring to Bourdieu's (1977) concept of '*habitus*' and '*body hexis*'.

Throop and Murphy explain that '*habitus*' is 'an internalized structure or set of structures (derived from pre-existing external structures) that determines how an individual acts and reacts to the world' (2002:186). '*Body hexis*' on the other hand they continue is the 'performative' aspect of this *habitus* and is tied directly to the body's 'motor function' (*ibid.*: 188). This is based on the idea that 'schemes are able to pass directly from practice to practice without moving through discourse and consciousness' (Krais, 1993:74). As such, Throop and Murphy (*op. cit.*: 188), following Bourdieu (1977:124) allege that it is possible to see the body as 'socially informed' regarding matters of intuitions, feelings and common sense'. This framework takes the language learning beyond mere words and demonstrates how 'the body is in the social world but the social world is also in the body' (Bourdieu, 1990:190).

The Italian language provides an example of this with a repertoire of wordless gestures with specific meanings: e.g. the sliding of one's forefinger forward under the chin to indicate "*mi ne frego*" ("I don't care"). Being aware of such gestures allows learners to *feel* and express the sentiment in another language. Phipps (*op. cit.*:57) claims that TLLs do not necessarily explicitly want facts, information or mere words, but 'bodily *hexis*': the security and confidence to respond appropriately in a situation. They want to be able to feel the rhythm of normal exchanges, e.g. handing over the requisite documents when booking into a hotel. Phipps continues by describing the pleasurable effect of pronouncing the words of a foreign language: sensations embodied *within* the body as well as emanating *from* the body. She maintains that there is a physical feel to speaking the words of another language: and satisfaction to be gained in finding the correct rhythm, stress and intonation. Phipps cites a classmate who declares that the Italian word, '*olio d'oliva*' ('olive oil' in Italian) 'feels like liquid in your mouth' (2007:88).

Furthering the notion of *habitus* and *body hexis*, or what Phipps refers to as 'bodying-forth' (*ibid.*:65) in tourist endeavours, also entails the process of 'way-finding' and getting around, either through role-play in the classroom, or actually in the target country. Tourism by its very nature involves movement from place to place. Much is made of the process of asking for and understanding directions in TLL classrooms. As such, maps, guidebooks and brochures are important objects for TLLs. They are part of a tangible collection of written foreign-language artefacts, along with dictionaries and phrasebooks. Knowing the language: reading the signs, asking the way, interpreting the map, and ultimately being familiar with the sense of a place can increase one's appreciation, or even one's 'excitement' of it (Phipps, *ibid.*:75). One can 'dwell' (*ibid.*) in it and in doing so, a transformation is effected.

2.7 Other benefits of learning a language

In this present thesis investigating LLL, tourism is not fore-grounded in the same way as in Phipps's research. However even learners who could be classified as TLLs may derive multiple gains from learning a foreign language

as well as just those related to holidays. If motivation is multi-faceted and dynamic, so are 'benefits' as well.

Nevertheless in a previous study of adult language learners (Hooker, 2008) a third of respondents from across England, indicated that either 'travel' or 'visits abroad', constituted their reason for attending a language class. Additionally almost all these respondents had visited or intended to visit a country where their target language would be spoken. This suggests that tourism or travel *does* represent a substantial rationale for their participation in LLL. However, for two-thirds of the respondents tourism was *not* their primary motivation for learning a language. In the same study (*ibid.*), more than 30% of the respondents stated that they attended for 'fun'; for 'stimulating the brain' or 'pure interest'. This constitutes a key focus of my present enquiry; i.e. the nature of this 'mental stimulation' or 'fun' that LLLs experience.

If the interpretation of the value of LLL is to be comprehensive, vague answers such as 'interest' or 'fun' must be probed further for a deeper understanding of the learner's intended meaning and the nature of the impact of the learning.

Firstly it is necessary to consider the perspectives of other *stakeholders*. Discussion regarding the description and promotion of the 'benefits of language-learning' from fields other than tourism or language education must be examined critically.

2.7.1 Benefits for the brain and mind

The review of the literature to this point relating ageing, language to the brain or workings of the mind paints a gloomy picture of the overall potential for successful adult language learning, with notable exceptions (e.g. Mechelli *et al*, 2004; Herdina and Jessner, 2002). Nevertheless I remain convinced of the wide-reaching mental benefits of learning and using other languages besides one's own.

Apart from my own positive experiences, this conviction was reinforced by Bialystok and her colleagues' work (2004, 2006, 2007), suggesting the various cognitive benefits to be derived from lifelong bilingualism. One study suggests

the delayed onset of dementia to be over 4 years later for some bilinguals compared to monolinguals (Bialystok *et al*, 2007).

There have been numerous scientific studies over the last decade, which have looked specifically at the brain or cognitive function to suggest multiple beneficial effects of SLA/multilingualism upon the brain at different stages of the lifespan. These include, amongst others, that:

- fast language learners have more white matter (the brain's communication mechanism with the rest of the body) in the auditory region (Brickman *et al*,2006);
- the ability to learn an L2 in adulthood is linked to brain anatomy (Wong *et al*,2007);
- learning an L2 may not be as laborious for adults as pre-supposed (McLaughlin *et al*,2004).

Such studies may be particularly helpful for those interested in social/clinical care and pathological ageing. However to highlight the benefits, or equally the disadvantages, to older adults of SLA/ bilingualism solely from a neurological and cognitive viewpoint is one-dimensional. It does not go far enough in explaining what neurology and cognition demonstrate about the holistic meaning of language learning to adults in general: in non-pathological, i.e. normal situations.

Moreover these one-dimensional accounts of cause-and-effect benefits of learning a foreign language still do not give an adequate explanation or description of the 'quick' (Phipps, 2007) of learning another language, nor of the deeper and more personal reasons why LLLs might voluntarily learn another language.

The same argument can be applied to many motivational studies, whereby the taxonomies of different types of language learning motivation are carefully classified (e.g. Gardner's AMTB, 1985) and used as evidence for freezing the motivational picture. Here again, the approach to language learning appears to be one of attempting to package the multi-faceted range of learner experience and potential in a way that is universally applicable. This presumes that all language teachers need to do is respond in pedagogical kind to an

interpretation of the stated motivation given by learners, normally at the beginning of a learning programme.

Questionnaires asking language learners to tick a prescribed motivational category (e.g. 'knowledge' or 'confidence') for participating in a class (Appendix I) are unhelpful to learning providers and teachers alike. As learning programmes unfold, changes in motivation occur due to situational, and individuals' psychological and cognitive development. Motivation is also complex and can be difficult to articulate. However there have been moves towards more comprehensive reformulations of the *dynamic* construct of motivation by researchers such as Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), giving more credence to 'motivational flux', and relating motivation to expectations, goals or wider socio-cultural influences.

2.7.2 Socio-political benefits

Discourse related to the promotion of the 'benefits' of language learning on a nationwide or institutional basis, is value-laden, with implications both politically and for society, and is fraught with implicit issues of power and control. The question could be, "*who* is it that is actually benefiting from this activity?" Is it the learner, the teacher, society, the government, or the learning-provider?

There are large-scale socio-political research projects concerning lifelong learning *in general*, which have been carried out with many research resources, and which have conceived analytical frameworks providing appropriate models for such an abstract notion as 'societal benefits'. Studies such as the 'Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning' (Schuller and Watson, 2009) commissioned by NIACE, and Delors and his team's '*Learning: The Treasure Within*' (1996) are good examples of this:

Schuller and Watson's enquiry focused upon the future for lifelong learning. They propose a triangular framework with three interrelating 'capitals'. These are 'forms of assets which have value for individuals and society':

- *Human capital* refers to the skills and qualifications held by individuals, normally deployed in the workplace, but also for use in social/community contexts;

- *Social capital* refers to participation in networks where values are shared so that people contribute to common goals. Education is a powerful way of accessing these networks;
- *Identity capital* is the ability to maintain healthy self-esteem and a sense of meaning/purpose in life (Schuller and Watson, 2009:15-16).

Delors' seminal report from the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (1996) has a similar but alternative set of concepts:

He proposes four pillars of education: *learning to know* (e.g. mastering learning tools and skills), *learning to do* (e.g. personal competence and performance), *learning to live together* (e.g. understanding diversity and other cultures) and *learning to be* (complete development of mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic appreciation and spirituality).

Schuller and Watson's model provides a *workable* way of considering the nature or type of 'benefits' in the empirical findings in my research. On the other hand, Delors' model is more in keeping with the ethos of this present thesis. At the same time, the conceptualisation of social 'capital' is too extensive a subject in its own right to be discussed or applied comprehensively in this present thesis.

2.7.3 *English is not enough*

A government report for the Australian Department for Education and Training (Fernandez, 2007) approaches the subject of 'benefits' by referring to key research articles reflecting current thinking in language teaching and learning, psycholinguistics, and SLA. The main emphasis in her report concerns language learning in compulsory education in Australia, especially at primary and secondary level. Fernandez summarises the purpose of the report as being that of providing 'accessible, concise information about the benefits of language learning and the inadequacy of the notion that *English is enough*' (*ibid*: 2).

She lists the five general areas of benefit as follows:

- a) Benefits of language learning for *literacy/linguistic* development;
- b) *Cognitive* benefits of language learning;
- c) Culture, language and *intercultural language learning*;
- d) Intercultural competency, global understanding and '*English is not enough*';
- e) Age and SLL (Fernandez, *ibid*.).

In outlining (a) the *linguistic benefits* of language learning for literacy development, Fernandez refers firstly to Yelland and colleagues' 1993 study, suggesting that children's 'meta-linguistic awareness' (i.e. the ability to understand and use knowledge *about* the nature and functions of language) is enhanced through learning an L2. It is through the experience of acquiring other languages from an early age that children develop the understanding about the nature and the systems of language needed for readiness for reading and literacy in general (Bialystok, 1987; Liddicoat, 2001). Fernandez also notes that the skills and strategies that are required to make meaning from texts, such as: using knowledge of the world, making inferences, skimming or guessing the contextual meaning of words, are easily transferred from and honed by working from language to language (Baker, 2006). This begs the question whether adult language learners with their greater *world knowledge* can make even greater sense of the written word, and transfer ideas between different language systems.

Fernandez makes a slightly different point in her interpretation of (b) the *cognitive benefits*, by, as well as writing of the benefits for 'meta-linguistic awareness', she observes that bilingual children appear to have a more 'analytical orientation to language' (*ibid*:9). This arises from the sheer necessity of having to organise two separate language systems, which helps them control their linguistic-processing (Bialystok, 2001; Ianco-Worrall, 1972; Bialystok *et al*, 2005). Furthermore there are also benefits for divergent and creative thinking (Swain and Lapkin, 1991; Eckstein, 1986).

With regard to the benefits for (c) & (d) *intercultural understanding* and *global competitiveness*, Fernandez notes that it is through language that an understanding of not only the visible objects of a specific culture, such as food and social rituals, is mediated, but also the intangible and invisible things such as people's values, attitudes, and their ways of thinking about the world and their life in it (Wierzbicka, 1997). As such, after Baker, 2006, Fernandez explains that a language *indexes* a culture.

Regarding (d), the benefit of *global understanding*, Fernandez points out that:

Competence in a second or third language, intercultural understanding and cross-cultural competence are becoming crucial components of a basic education to prepare students for living in an increasingly globalised world. (*ibid.*: 16-17).

In point (d) Fernandez comes closer to the points that Phipps (2007) makes, if somewhat less emphatically, regarding the moral aspect of 'doing good' through making the effort to speak someone else's language, when the rewards seem incommensurate to the effort.

However this is perhaps not so altruistic. Fernandez draws on Clyne's (2005) account of Australia's status as a mainly monolingual nation: serving to illustrate how economically important it is for society, in competitive terms, to speak another language in a world where bi/ multi-linguals far exceed the number of monolinguals (Clyne, *ibid.*). On this point Fernandez reflects that speakers of several languages in the developing world are much more aware of the importance of learning other languages, giving them a competitive edge over somewhat complacent monolingual speakers of English. This is especially relevant in the case of Britain, where the negative perception of the British as 'language barbarians' (Tomlinson, 2004) is prevalent. A European Commission report, published in 2006, suggests that 62% of Britons only speak one language: one of the highest in Europe. However the figures in this same report indicate that English is also the most-widely spoken language in The European Union, with 77% of respondents recommending English as the first choice of foreign language.

Fernandez's final point (e) in the report concerns the controversial debate about the optimum age for starting to learn a foreign language and the issue of 'the age factor'. This brings the discourse back to the SLA 'younger is better' stance discussed earlier in this thesis. The political implications for this are for the possible introduction of early L2 programmes in Australia. For this Fernandez draws on a recent European language policy document from the Commission of the European Communities (2003), which recommends sowing the seeds of positive attitudes towards other languages and cultures and laying the foundations for later learning at an early age, e.g. in the kindergarten.

Discussions of the political or social ramifications of nationwide language learning programmes must also be balanced by considering the opposite view of how the learning and use of foreign languages in society may be deemed to be detrimental for individuals or nations.

2.8 The advantages of monolingualism

As this is not the key focus of this thesis, it is only touched upon in brief, but it is important to acknowledge that there also exists resistance to the learning and use of a foreign language, *even* when done of one's own volition. This may exist on a national, local, and on an individual level.

On an individual basis, the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida strongly avows his monolingualism, professing how it is his 'dwelling' (1996:1). He continues:

I feel lost outside the French language. The other languages which, more or less clumsily, I read, decode, or sometimes speak, are languages I shall never inhabit. Not only am I lost, fallen, and condemned outside the French language, I have the feeling of honouring or serving all idioms, in a word, of writing the 'most' and the 'best' when I sharpen the resistance of 'my' French.' (*ibid.*:56).

There are often strong reasons for certain stances of nationalism and protectionism within linguistic groups. Possible disadvantages of learning foreign languages for society and nations as a whole can be identified. They include issues such as:

- protecting minority languages from attrition (Crystal, 2000; Nettle and Romaine, 2000);
- bureaucratically championing the 'purity' and the consolidation of a major language such as French, after thousands of years of a proliferation of diverse regional dialects (Nadeau and Barlow, 2004);
- enforcement of language learning upon nations, such as the mandatory adoption of Russian as an L1 by former east-bloc communist countries, e.g. East Germany.

Equally the globally dominant nature of English and perception of it as the *lingua franca*, may lead to resistance, lack of opportunities to practice and failing to engage meaningfully with other foreign languages by native English-speakers.

2.9 Summary

In this chapter this enquiry is served by a journey through a wide-ranging selection of interdisciplinary literature allied to different aspects of the research question,

What does learning a foreign language 'do' and 'mean' for older adults learning a language in community settings in the UK, as viewed from the learners' perspective?

These aspects concern: the *motivation*, what inspires adults to continue learning another language; the *context*, the language-bound, event-bound and purpose-bound situations of language learning; the observable *impact* of language learning upon older people, and the perceived *meaning* of language learning: for the learning itself, for educators and for society in general.

To understand the value and what *benefits* may be derived from learning an additional language as an adult, it has been necessary to firstly investigate the process of learning another language, i.e. understand how it works.

The journey has proceeded through: neurological/biological; linguistic/linguistic processing; cognitive/psychological; and socio-cultural perspectives regarding the impact and effects of learning another language as an adult.

Despite an emphasis in the linguistic literature upon competence, skills and the measurement of attainment, it is possible to identify significant personal benefits as being derived from language learning and bilingualism, as follows:

Recent neuro-linguistic studies have shown there to be beneficial effects upon the brain, concerning the architecture and the *biology of the brain*. These include, for example, advantages from language learning for domains which 'exercise' and 'stimulate' the brain, i.e. the 'grey matter' (Mechelli *et al*, 2004) and those which transmit information to the rest of the body, i.e. the 'white matter' (Brickman *et al*, 2006).

There are *cognitive* studies which relate learning an additional language to enhanced cognitive processing (e.g. Bialystok *et al*, 2004; 2006; 2007), which brings us closer to understanding complex mental processes such as learning. Additionally there are benefits for literacy and linguistic development, derived

from language learning, (e.g. Liddicot, 2001; Baker, 2006), as well other cognitive benefits enabling skills-transferral, especially those skills involved in organising different linguistic systems (e.g. Bialystok *et al*, 2005).

There is some consensus that the benefits from language learning are most pronounced in younger people, stemming from interpretations of Lenneberg's critical period hypothesis (1967). However there are moves towards research which goes beyond stressing merely the 'maturational constraints' (Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2003) of learning a language in later life.

Such research demonstrates how some of the perceived cognitive disadvantages of the developing and ageing brain may be overcome by: hard work; effort and explicit *instruction* (e.g. Lenneberg, *op. cit.*; Marinova-Todd *et al*, 2000). Other research suggests a 'fundamental difference' (de Keyser, 2000; Bley-Vroman, 1988) when learning another language as an adult. This is one that privileges viewing successful adult SLA/SLL as one relying on the 'different' qualities of adult cognition and learning. This may include drawing on: problem solving mechanisms (Rosanzky, 1975); mindfulness of grammatical anomalies, and awareness of language structure (Ioup, 1995), together with possessing increased meta-linguistic and meta-cognitive awareness (Piaget, 1959).

However, it is when socio-cultural, and particularly contextual factors, are taken into account that a more comprehensive and qualitative view of what language learning 'does' and 'means' for adult learners emerges.

Fernandez's report (2007) highlights how acquiring other languages helps, both society and individuals, in 'intercultural understanding'. This occurs by 'indexing' culture and mediating our understanding of other people's values and attitudes, as well as the physical and visible objects of their cultures, e.g. food and social rituals. Also it helps socially with intercultural/multi-linguistic competency and global competitiveness, especially for nations like Australia, which are predominantly monolingual.

Regarding the 'self' and 'identity', there are constructive implications for second language learners in: establishing 'social identity' (Norton, 2001); countering

any preconceived ideas held by others about someone's L1 identity, and even escaping from more mundane constraints of one's own L1 life and identity (Phipps, 2007; Coffey and Street, 2008). The *young* adult learners described by Kramsch (2009) are also shown to negotiate their identities and selves through means of other foreign languages. Bellingham's study (2004) presents a positive picture of how *older* adult second language learners perceive themselves as successful learners, who value learning a language.

The following empirical study replicates Phipps' 2007 research most closely in terms of the context and motivation of the participants: learning a language predominantly for reasons unconnected to the dominant linguistic discourses of attainment, skill-proficiency and utility.

Phipps (*ibid.*) writes of how her group of tourist language learners, learning a language for tourism purposes may benefit from: minimising various types of risk when travelling by rehearsing expected behaviour; learning the language to *feel* the physical behaviour and the norms that are required to communicate in simple exchanges abroad; experiencing the dimensions of human-relatedness associated with everyday transactional exchanges, and learning to get around easily, when travelling. She also describes the 'communitas.... or social bondedness' (*ibid.*: 43) possible in the adult language class, when a group of people share conversation, purposes, desires and interests. A sense of group affiliation for adult SL classes is also described by Kegan *et al* (2001).

In chapter four, my investigation progresses on from what is revealed about adult language learning in the academic and theoretical literature and socio-political reports to how learners themselves interpret and perceive their own experiences of 'linguaging' (Phipps, 2007) and learning another language specifically in community settings.

Lou went to the first Italian lesson as a condemned man walks to Death Row. His years in the classroom had not been glorious. Now he would face further humiliation. But it had been surprisingly enjoyable. First the mad Signora asked them all their names and gave them ridiculous pieces of colourful card to write them on, but they had to write Italianised versions.

Lou became Luigi. In a way he liked it. It was important. 'Mi chiamo Luigi', he would say, and frown at people, and they seemed impressed.

(Binchy, *ibid*: 244)

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, firstly the philosophical rationale for this study is examined. The 'hermeneutic phenomenological' approach is explored along with the case for using conversational interviews; a 'fusion of horizons' and the 'first-person' perspective. Secondly the contextual background and step-by-step procedures and methods for collecting and analysing the data are outlined.

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 *The importance of philosophical rationale*

An outline of the philosophical foundations underpinning this study is fundamental to understanding its design and aims. It is important too that researchers state their stance from the outset, for reasons of ethics and rigour. Angen (2000) maintains that reflexivity and identification of a researcher's bias and research agenda is a moral implication at every stage of the enquiry: 'moral soundness' being part of the 'ethical validation' (*ibid.*) The topic should also be relevant and important to all concerned in the research process to strengthen the research's validity, contributing to its 'substantive validation' (Angen, *ibid*).

During the research process I have been informed by qualitative-orientated methodologies such as: narrative, life-history, hermeneutics and phenomenology: not necessarily all with a prescribed set of methodological procedures. Silverman (2006:6-7) has criticised the latter methodologies of 'hermeneutics' and 'phenomenology' as being 'obscure philosophical positions' requiring a lot of work to understand and use appropriately. To a certain extent I agree that 'over-theorising' (*ibid.*) is not necessary for what is essentially my simple interview study focusing on the experiences and stories of *leisure language learners* (LLLs). Moreover during my research journey I have been

somewhat intimidated by the methodological theory: rendered 'inert' (Silverman, 2001) by the sheer proliferation of literature generated on this complex subject.

At first glance this chapter may seem to be heavily-laden with the philosophical principles concerning the *how* of the thesis. Previously I had believed that a methodology section of a thesis was a mere technicality, detailing procedures and ticking boxes for ethical protocol. However, I have since discovered that the methodology chapter is central to the validity and integrity of this study. It allows for the thesis to be related back and forward to the research community, practice and the wider world. A methodology section like this is crucial in the light of there being few antecedent studies referring to this topic and context. As such it has to build its own momentum and a sense of the research 'problem', in order to interest different audiences in the merits of its aims and endeavour.

Failing to draw consciously upon theories and concepts, even the most challenging ones, which have been meaningful to me would result, according to Silverman (2006), in a 'touristic' or even 'journalistic' approach to interpreting the data. He claims that doing so privileges insights which are presented as 'different' or 'authentic', but which are theorised uncritically or unconsciously.

Additionally I am compelled to demystify the complex concepts of both hermeneutics and phenomenology, both of which have touched me profoundly during the research process.

3.1.2 A sense of principled pragmatism

According to Grix keeping a coherent paradigmatic thread throughout all sections of the research enquiry is the key to supporting the foundations of the whole 'edifice' of the research project (Grix, 2004), to ensure validity, reliability and transferability.

By striving for clarity and constancy of the epistemological and ontological terms, researchers are more able to recognise others' and defend their own positions (*ibid.*:58) and understand elements of the research process. However, an insistence on precise methodological terminology for educational research (ER) seems to be at odds with a Socratic view of ambiguity as part of

intellectual development. Research methodologies are open to different interpretations and critique. This idea is in keeping with the key notions influencing this thesis, which are *interpretation* and *understanding*. However this *understanding* is more of the 'empathic' understanding found in the human sciences rather than the narrower 'rational' understanding of the behavioural sciences (van Manen, 1997:15). It is important too to appreciate that neither interpretation nor understanding is ever finite; there is always room for further interpretation. I hold that 'all assumptions are temporal and open to re-interpretation....negotiated through continuous conversation and dialogue' (Angen, 2000:385). This is the position taken throughout all the stages of this present research study.

Some SLA researchers claim that practitioners are more preoccupied with everyday concerns than furthering knowledge in general (e.g. Nunan, 1992:18-19). As a language teacher *and* researcher I am concerned with both. There has to be a type of 'principled pragmatism' of the sort that Kumaravadivelu (2000:30-34) describes for language pedagogy. In seeking the right methods for teaching (or research of the same), following Kumaravadivelu (*ibid.*:37), it is necessary to take into account:

- the parameter of *particularity* – searching for context-sensitive, location-specific and appropriate methods: based on a true understanding of 'local linguistic, socio-cultural and political particularities';
- the parameter of *practicality* - breaking down the traditional binary role-relationship of 'theory versus practice' and encouraging two-way dialogue/ interaction;
- the parameter of *possibility* - seeking to tap into the 'socio-political consciousness' which participants bring into the classroom (or research process) and the possibilities for identity or social transformation.

In fact this present study has not proceeded in a linear and rational way based on theoretically-prescriptive methodology. The substance of the thesis: the data and findings, has emerged from actually getting out and *doing it*: as some things can 'only be known through the process of action' (Haynes, 2003:5). Additionally Haynes highlights the importance of knowing and taking different contexts into account; failing to acknowledge this is 'perilous'. She continues that knowledge of the context is an 'eclectic mix' of understanding the

multiple references at play and having a “feeling for the organism” (*ibid.*), i.e. being at one with the focus of your study (McClintock, in Fox Keller, 1983).

This deep reflection upon the meaning of *what* I am doing and *why* as I am in it: ‘*being* it’, echoes Heidegger’s (1962 [1927]) hermeneutic notion of ‘being-there’ (*Dasein* in German), i.e. understanding it from being *within* it. Van Manen refers to this as ‘the aspect of our humanness which is capable of wondering about its own existence and inquiring into its own Being’ (1997:180-181). It cannot be observed or experimented upon from the outside. This is part of my fundamental interpretation of the *Dasein* of my participants’ ‘lived’ experiences too.

This resonates strongly in a context-sensitive and pragmatic study like this one. Progress has been haphazard but has allowed for imaginative options and reflexivity. Although not always efficient in a *rational* sense, it permits creative possibilities, in keeping with the unpredictability of human interaction and life in general. My choices of which methods of educational research to use have been made, not necessarily because they are theoretically sound, or even because they are intuitively true, but because they are the ones that work for me for this context (Haynes: *op. cit.*). Furthermore this reflects Dewey’s idea of ‘flexible purposing’ (1938), where the need for explicit outcomes is recognised, but ones which are flexible and adaptive to context and purpose. This has been my approach to both this study and my teaching practice in general.

A deeply philosophical approach to research such as phenomenology allows for the balancing of pragmatism and attention to action with strong theoretical foundations and consciousness. Cresswell (2007:58) explains that overall phenomenology has some common and unifying assumptions: i) that it involves the study of the *lived experiences* of persons; ii) that these experiences are viewed as *conscious* ones and iii) that the understanding of and development of these experiences lies with *description*, and not with explanations and analyses. This follows Dilthey’s (1987) distinction between ‘human’ (mental, social, historical) phenomena requiring interpretation and understanding, and ‘natural’ (physical, chemical, behavioural) phenomena, which mainly involve external observation and explanation (van Manen, *op. cit.*: 181).

This thesis lends itself to a phenomenological approach, as it involves 'human science' research incorporating the study of the 'essence' (i.e. a sense of what some-'thing' *is*) of the phenomenon of *leisure language learning* (LLL).

The overall aim is to build a rich and 'thick' (Geertz, 1973) description of an aspect; a phenomenon; a case of the world (here, that of LLL) through process-based interpretation and understanding. This endeavour allows the reader to understand and empathise, and have a sense of entering into the 'lived reality of the case' (Ernest, 1994:25). The ultimate aim is to recreate 'verisimilitude' (Richardson, 1994:250) where the reader is transported directly into the world described in the writing, which appears 'real' and vital.

Epistemologically this description of the reality of LLL is 'socially-constructed' in nature (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) and includes multiple perspectives and interpretations. In the previous chapter the multiple perspectives from diverse stakeholders and studies of *how* older adults might learn and acquire an L2 were considered, along with the possible benefits for language learners as seen by outside parties. Ultimately however, it is how the *learners* themselves construct the reality of their LLL, and evaluate it, which constitutes the methodological focus in this present study.

3.2 Hermeneutic phenomenology

3.2.1 Basic premises

This thesis has been greatly influenced by the thinking of the educator, Max van Manen (1997; 1990) regarding the subject of 'hermeneutic phenomenology' (HP). For van Manen 'hermeneutics' and 'phenomenology' are both interchangeable as terms. It is impossible to do justice to a full discussion of either 'hermeneutics' or 'phenomenology' within the confines of this doctoral thesis. Nevertheless, I would like to highlight some key precepts of HP, which I believe support the methodological design of this study. Most importantly for this doctorate in *education* the whole HP process, following van Manen (*ibid*) is cyclical and begins and finishes with pedagogy.

Van Manen reports (1997) that the European approach to the scholarship of pedagogy has been relatively unconcerned with questions of method. Gadamer

too comments in an interview that it is “not their mastery of methods but their hermeneutic imagination that distinguishes truly productive researchers” (2001:42). He also explains that practical hermeneutics is not just confined to hermeneutic ‘methods’ *per se*, but that it should be present throughout the whole research (*ibid.*). Consequently it is more appropriate to foreground the philosophical foundations of HP than to emphasise specific methods. Methods may change according to the craft and disciplinary background of the researcher. Van Manen gives intelligibility to this type of research approach, which combines the *interpretation* (i.e. *hermeneutics*) of experiences lived by humans in the world (phenomena) with a descriptive *expression* using ‘the text or artifact [sic] as objectification of lived experience’ (i.e. *phenomenology*) (*op.cit.*:180).

With regards to its purpose and aims, van Manen, citing Marcel (1950), points out that a HP study is not meant to refer to ‘a problem in need of a solution but rather a mystery in need of evocative comprehension’ (1997:50). The only problematic aspect to this resides in the term ‘mystery’, because this terminology, as van Manen points out, may suggest ‘less substance and less reality’ (*ibid.*) being assigned to the phenomenon, i.e. in this study, LLL. This may be at odds with traditional scholarly criteria for ‘good’ research, often seen to include the objective, measurable certainty proposed by those seeking the ‘mantle of respect and authority’ (Robson, 2002:27) conferred by positivism.

Epistemologically the aim of a HP enquiry is not to present ‘facticity’ (van Manen, 1997) about its main focus, as knowledge about the nature of the phenomenon as it is perceived cannot be so readily packaged and presented (van Manen, *ibid.*). The measurable and determinable ‘facts’ or observations more common in a quantitative study, do not sit well in a social science study such as this one, which deals with human consciousness, perception and social interaction.

Methodologically it is necessary to access learners’ subjectivity. Van Manen (*op. cit.*) holds that each human being interprets experiences subjectively in a way that is ‘inherently pre-linguistic’, which can only become more known and

appreciated through a 'hermeneutic' (interpretative) and ultimately dialectical process and understanding of the collective discourses of human experiences. This forces a 'messy confrontation with human subjectivity' (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:8), especially when looking at people's perceptions, e.g. through their life histories and accounts of their experiences.

3.2.2 Conversation and concealment/ unconcealment

Gadamer, himself in *spoken conversation* (2001), recognises the hermeneutic 'method' inherent in 'conversation' with another person, or even with another text as a means of understanding: understanding which is embodied and mediated by language. Palmer writes of Gadamer's 'understanding' as 'an event of the disclosure of the truth, an event which in true conversation is reached by the partners together' (2001:11). Gadamer explains further in an interview with Carsten Dutt, "through an encounter with the other we are lifted above the narrow confines of our knowledge" (*ibid*: 49).

Additionally Moscovici, himself in a spoken interview, maintains that it is possible to learn "a good deal more when hearing people speak than when reading what they wrote" (2000:233). However, Portelli points out that, oral sources are not always very reliable, with 'errors, inventions and myths', *but* these 'lead through and beyond facts to their *meanings*' (my italics, 1991:2).

The *interpretation* and *understanding* begins as the phenomenon starts to appear and develop through 'unconcealment' (Heidegger, 1954; Gadamer, 1979) and 'concealment' of aspects of both of its parts and its whole, by means of the conversation, e.g. between the researcher and the research participant.

However, it is often in the hidden or implied elements of a work of interpretation or depiction (which may be in any medium, such as a text or an artwork) where the truth or essence becomes 'unconcealed' or discovered, but from a *subjective* perspective by the viewer/ reader/onlooker. This happens despite omissions or lack of explicit detail in its immediate representation (e.g. an artistic concealment/unconcealment depiction of an Italian street, see frontispiece, page 3). A partially-interpreted presentation to the world allows for other re-interpretations and meanings being applied to the work by future

audiences. At the same time it allows just enough 'unconcealment' of references with which audiences or readers can identify and 'appreciate' the idea or phenomenon.

In research, interpretation may continue by validating the interpretations by a 'validating circle of inquiry' (van Manen, 1997), i.e. substantiating the themes arising heuristically through examples in the research. These themes may in turn be *validated* by returning to the original interlocutor or interviewee, and then returned to the text and so on.

3.2.3 Research activities

With an HP study van Manen (1997) suggests that it may be useful to use personal experience as a *starting* point. However he stresses that this must not involve privileging one's autobiographical experiences and sentiments. The use of 'I' is more a question of orientating the researcher mindfully to the nature of the phenomenon. Additionally it serves a useful function; it shows that the 'author recognizes both that one's own experiences are the possible experiences of others and also that the experiences of others are the possible experiences of oneself' (*ibid*: 58). The *end* result of a study informed by van Manen's thinking (1990; 1997) constitutes a crafted text which aims to bring out the *essential* nature of the phenomenon studied.

Although not strictly prescribing a set of rules or methods, rather a 'dynamic interplay among six research activities', van Manen (*ibid*: 30), writes of the interrelationship between the stages of an enquiry (refer to Appendix II re: van Manen's 6 research activities). Cresswell (2007:59) writes of this that van Manen is proposing phenomenology not just as the objective structured description of some-*thing* in the 'lifeworld' (Husserl, 1970a), i.e. the world in which we live, but as an interpretative process where the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of lived-experiences. For van Manen, the researcher 'mediates' between meanings (1990:26).

3.3 Problems with 'pure' phenomenology

Moustakas (1994) approaches 'interpretation' differently: privileging objective *description*, encouraging participants to 'transcend' the phenomenon and perceive it 'freshly' (*ibid*) as if for the first time: developing his 'purer' form of 'transcendental phenomenology', or psychological phenomenology. Here there must be a process of 'bracketing' or Husserl's '*epoché*' (1982 [1913]), when the researcher's biases are made explicit and put to one side to be able to concentrate on the 'things themselves'. This allows for a distillation of the discourses of participants' experiences, free from their and the researcher's *a priori* knowledge and assumptions. This 'reduces' accounts of their actual experiences to a 'pure' representation of the phenomenon. In the investigative discourses and the descriptive texts, the researcher develops a '*textural description*' of *what* the participants experienced, and a '*structural description*' of *how* they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations or contexts (Cresswell, 2007:60). A combination of these two descriptions conveys an overall 'essence' of the experience. In practice it does make it difficult for a person to distinguish between and express what an experience 'does', and what it 'means' to them.

I am drawn to the philosophical pre-suppositions and quasi-poetic representation of both Moustakas's and van Manen's recommendations. The latter's work resonates strongly for me, especially the fact that phenomenological research (PR) is the 'study of essences' (1997:9): understanding the very nature of a phenomenon. Van Manen distinguishes phenomenology from other research disciplines in it does *not* aim to 'explicate' meanings specific to:

- particular cultures (ethnography/anthropology);
- certain social groups/society (sociology);
- historical periods (history);
- mental types/activity (psychology);
- an individual's personal life-history (biography) (adapted, 1997:11)

He asserts that phenomenology attempts to explicate (i.e. make explicit) the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence: our 'lifeworld' (Husserl, 1970): in this current case, the experiences of relating to a foreign language. Equally, acting and thinking like a phenomenological researcher entails

adopting the notion of ‘fusion of horizons’ (Gadamer,2001) of other disciplines too, in order to develop the true imaginative potential of a phenomenon. Human beings living in the real world are affected by aspects of *all* disciplines, even researchers in their chosen fields.

Van Manen suggests that PR might ask the question ‘What is the nature or the essence of this learning?’ (*op.cit*:9) in order to understand what a particular learning experience is like for a specific group of individuals. PR has been instructive for this present study in some but not all respects. The main problem with this lies with some of the tenets of pure phenomenology:

3.3.1 Bracketing

Husserl, (1982 [1932]), proposed phenomenology as a basis for all knowledge: making the transition between ‘my consciousness’ and ‘any consciousness’, as well as positing it as a scientifically-rigorous methodology for any discipline, especially philosophy. Van Manen writes of phenomenology’s claims to be scientific in a broad sense in that it is ‘systematic, explicit, self-critical, and intersubjective study of its subject matter, our lived experience’ (*op.cit*.:11). However, I question the practical viability of Husserl’s ‘bracketing’: explicitly quarantining the researcher’s biases and assumptions away from the phenomenon itself. In my study, the constructs of perception, consciousness, introspection, memory and testimony, which do not form the basis of an *a priori* knowledge of something, are highly valued in understanding the research problem. Additionally the researcher is very much present. Moreover, Pellauer writes, following Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur; that a complete phenomenological reduction results in a ‘leap from nowhere’ (2007:65) in our understanding of others’ ‘lived experiences’.

Moreover Gadamer (in conversation) points out that it is possible for our personal presumptions and prejudgements to “play a positive role” (2001:43) in our understanding. He asserts that these prejudgments are a product of the socialisation through which we access the world and the traditions and cultures in which we exist. He refers to this as “effective historical consciousness” (*ibid*: 46) or “historical heritage” (*ibid*: 48). He continues that we are not just “stamped by our genes” and that this socialisation is already happening in our mother’s

womb (*ibid*: 43). It is through this that we develop what he refers to as our personal “horizon” (*ibid*: 46) in our minds. In addition, he holds the view that “one can never by means of reflection place oneself in an externalised relation to one’s situation” (*ibid*: 46). Moreover he asserts that the notion that there is a separate truth from the person who is doing the understanding is an “illusion” (*ibid*.). Although our horizon may be limited, it may be broadened with encounters with other ‘horizons’. Through a “fusion of horizons” (*ibid*) some-*thing* is created which did not previously exist. Methodologically this positions the ‘researcher as instrument’ (Wellington, 2000), filtering participants’ stories through personal perceptions and awareness of the central thesis, in order to craft the final text.

3.3.2 Definitions and constructs

It is difficult to put a name or clear definition to the some-*thing*, or ‘phenomenon’ at the heart of this study. The word ‘phenomenon’ comes from the Greek, *phainesthai*, ‘to appear’, and is defined as ‘anything which may be perceived as an occurrence or fact by the senses’ or ‘the object of any experience’.

My interpretation of the core phenomenon in this thesis could be viewed as a ‘hyphenated’ phenomenon (Silverman, 2006) in my coinage of the term: ‘*leisure* language learning’ (LLL), i.e. leisure= allowed to do + learning a foreign language. It is a convenient way of providing a contextual reference point for engaging everyone in this particular research. This has connotations of learning being relaxed; done in one’s free time and not for outcomes of measurable assessment. Defining the phenomenon connotatively from the outset could be seen as restrictive in terms of the future imaginings and potential ways of being for learners. ‘Leisure language learning’ does not express *all* the relevant contextual factors such as the setting (e.g. informal or formal learning; school or home), nor the personal variables such as a learner’s individual: age; stage of life (e.g. retired); beliefs; background; or motivation for learning. These must be considered to respond to the main research problem of exploring the personal value and meaning of LLL and defining the impact this has upon different learners. The themes regarding the ‘benefits’ of LLL can then emerge heuristically rather than being pre-prescribed.

3.3.3 *Expressive/evaluative narratives*

J. B. Thompson (1981) writes that some of the key thinkers associated with hermeneutics and phenomenology such as Ricoeur, Dilthey and Husserl have stressed that 'experience is essentially expressible' (1981:16). Nevertheless one problem with phenomenology is that it is not always possible to separate discourse about experience which is descriptive, and that which is explanatory or evaluative. Individuals, especially in speech, do not only make sense or meaning of a discourse topic by concentrating on the articulation of the structural dimensions of their experiences in the world, such as: 'where'; 'when' and 'who'. Those communicating often simultaneously express what they feel or believe. When giving their narratives participants do not necessarily differentiate between the 'facts' (historical events, occurrences, etc.) and evaluations or opinions. In qualitative research it is often difficult to separate 'fact' from 'value' (Grix, 2004).

Research participants' stories which give 'textural' (Moustakas, 1994) descriptions of *what* happened and *where* in their *positive* LLL experiences may in turn be interpreted, in order to model or recreate them for best teaching practice. However, it is learners' *evaluations* of their LLL experiences and the perceived *benefits* derived from these which are of particular interest to me. This reflects Rubenson's 1977 notion of adult participation in learning based on an 'expectancy and valency' model: i.e. adults will undertake learning programmes in the expectation that it will have positive and beneficial outcomes for them.

I have not used a narrative structural analysis of the interview data, but mini-narratives and 'small-scale stories' (Phipps, 2007:13). These have evolved organically during the course of the data collection, as part of the compromise between allowing 'a space for narrative and active questioning' (Gilham, 2005:49). Consequently 'narrative' acts as a *method* to elicit and supply data, rather than as an overall approach.

Neither the trajectory of the narrative, or of an individual life-course, nor any literary tropes in the text of the narrative are of interest *per se* to me. In conversational interviews participants do not necessarily stick to a linear

narrative or a life-history approach (i.e. continuous account from childhood to adulthood). As Gilham notes: to expect interviewees to tell stories, uninterrupted without 'gentle direction en route is unrealistic' (*op.cit*:49). However the interviewees appear to use narrative expression to make sense of their experiences (Freeman, 2004)

The word '*narrative*' comes from the Indo-European word '*gnārus*', meaning 'to know', as well as being understood as 'to tell'. This indicates that the significance of 'narrative' enquiry and methods extends beyond mere 'stories' and should be taken seriously.

3.3.4 From narratives to describing the phenomenon

However, for participants' narratives to be understood in a way relating directly to the phenomenon of 'leisure language learning' (LLL) the *collective* resonances and the *general* meaning from full transcripts of the interviews must be considered in depth, as well as the overall import of 'linguaging' (Phipps, 2007) and language learning events for each *individual*. The interview conversations in this present enquiry include both expressive and evaluative accounts of participants using and learning foreign languages during their life.

Meaning is *expressed* both explicitly and implicitly through description of historical events/ situations and articulation of beliefs, arguments, opinions, and evaluations of encounters with foreign languages. *Units of meaning* can be found in the stories told and in the opinions expressed which have led to my interpretations of the possible 'benefits' and impact of LLL upon the research participants. Meaning has been *made* using Gadamer's (1989; 2001) iterative process through which a new understanding of a whole reality (i.e. that of LLL) is achieved by exploring the details of existence and experience. Following Gadamer (*op. cit*), I view this understanding as being linguistically-mediated through conversations and dialogue with both others and different texts. In this current enquiry interpretation continuously evolves through conversations between: me as researcher and my own experience; between me and the participants; and between me/the participants and the various writings and re-writings of their experience.

To proceed meaningfully from 15 interviews to the essential themes highlighted in chapters four and five, it has been necessary to turn to van Manen's recommended activities for hermeneutic phenomenological (HP) research (see appendix II). Although establishing the key themes from the interview data effectively comprises the *analysis* stage of the research process, van Manen does not use the word as such here (Appendix II). The word 'analysis' comes from the Greek *analuein* to 'dissolve, break down'. A structured approach to analysing or 'breaking down' the data, such as might be found in the codes of grounded theory, quantitative categorisation or with computerised analysis packages focusing on word/phrase frequency or similar, would be somewhat problematic and inhibitive for an HP enquiry. In Heideggerian terms (1954), it is more a case of a '*bringing forth*'; a creation or a 'revealing' of something: a 'realm of truth' that was previously concealed. As such Van Manen privileges hermeneutic *interpretation* of the phenomenon, mediating the meaning that research participants make from their life experiences. This also entails maintaining a strong balance between constantly cross-referencing both *the parts* and *the whole* of the phenomenon (LLL), *embedded* in both collective and individual life experiences. Rather than it being a question of *breaking down* the data, it has been a question of having a 'conversation with the situation' (Schön, 1983) through a 'hermeneutical circle', (Heidegger, 1962).

In practical step-by-step terms the HP research process (following van Manen, Appendix II) in this present enquiry has involved:

- i) turning to a phenomenon that truly interests me (i.e. LLL in community settings);
- ii) investigating the LLL experience as it is lived rather than as it is pre-conceived or conceptualised;
- iii) reflecting continuously on the emergent themes characterising the phenomenon, with inherent 'analysis' starting right from the outset, with my own orientation to LLL;
- iv) transcribing the interviews in full to listen to each participant's voice closely, noting meaning-making and paralinguistic clues, e.g. hesitation or emphasis, as well as constructing a sense of both the conditions of each interview and each person;
- v) highlighting the recounted stories and explicitly-expressed opinions/beliefs, and evaluations (the 'units of meaning') in a *pen-portrait*, i.e. a textual sketch giving an outline and an essence of the most relevant interview data, as well as a sense of the interview process itself. Also for each 'unit of meaning', giving my interpretative summary of any perceived 'benefits' or impact upon each individual;

- vi) offering these *pen-portraits* back to participants for their subsequent re-interpretation/approval;
- vii) incorporating subsequent re-interpretations/feedback from participants into the descriptive text;
- viii) looking for common strands and essential themes in the pen-portraits which characterise the phenomenon of LLL.

A collective consideration of all fifteen pen-portraits has revealed the recurrence and general resonance of certain key issues: how participants feel about themselves in relation to LLL and foreign languages (*identity*); how LLL has affected them mentally (*cognition*); language learning across the lifespan (*lifelong learning*); the use of a language for a specific purpose/reason (*instrumentality*); how they felt about the language; its people and its cultural artefacts (*language and culture*) and how they reacted with others in different situations connected with foreign languages (*the social dimension*). Establishing the six essential thematic headings in italics involved consideration of the ‘*parts*’: the subheadings and sub-categories, in order to ‘bring forth’ and textually describe the quality and characteristics of the overall phenomenon of leisure language learning: the ‘*whole*’.

However this analytical framework does not necessarily represent a ‘window into the mind’ of the interviewee, nor the presentation or production of an individual interviewee, but rather the ‘co-construction of interviewer and interviewee’ (Block, 2000:759) and of *meaning* rather than truth. The veracity or objective ‘truth’ of the LLL experience is not the central concern, as the data can only be internally triangulated by recourse to the hermeneutic circle of interpretation and re-interpretation and its being viewed as being more than a sum of its parts.

3.4 Choosing the research participants

The hermeneutic dimension of van Manen’s (1997) proposals highlights the importance of reflexivity both in teaching practice and in research. In this current enquiry participants have been invited to *reflect* upon their experiences as well as recount them in conversation.

In educational research it is often expedient to recruit research participants from the academic or teaching communities. However there is a disadvantage with this; teachers are 'generally very articulate' (Richards, 2003:80) and eager to give their opinions. Reliance solely on teachers' viewpoints can sometimes be misleading regarding the true nature of the classroom ecology. Besides which, the main focus of this present study is on the impact of learning rather than the process of teaching. With this in mind, the prominence of the teacher's perspective in this current study is negligible. The aim is not to rely on the 'divine orthodoxy' of the educator (Silverman, 2006:390) nor the third-person view of the research community, but to concentrate on the *first-person* perspective, i.e. as experienced directly by the learner.

I am also drawn to the views of individuals who are *not* naturally articulate or those from marginalised social groups, e.g. those with differing educational backgrounds who are not usually afforded the opportunity to speak out. With a view to furthering knowledge from all perspectives, through my *purposive* choice of participants I hope to counter Marxist elitism that '*la peuple ne pense pas*', i.e. "people are not capable of thinking rationally, only intellectuals are" (Moscovici 2000:228). Moscovici's concept (given in conversation) of the social psychology of knowledge is concerned with "common-sense thinking and with language and communication" (*ibid.*:280) which, for him, is as important as 'scientific knowledge'. I believe that there is much to be learnt from the 'common-sense' knowledge of the group of ordinary people in this study, recounting their commonplace stories of LLL: basic human experiences and interactions. They are older people who are experienced in the 'lifeworld' (Husserl, 1970) rather than the academic world.

The participants in this research are also not entrenched in the professional development/reflexive practice loop, being mostly retired from sectors of the workforce other than teaching. They not only appear to welcome a chance to reflect upon their experiences, but also tend to give explanatory description of their experiences with freshness and relish. Educational researchers are infrequent visitors to ACE classrooms so learners may arguably welcome the unfamiliar opportunity to voice their opinions. Added to which older people in general are normally in a position to have a cache of experiences and

memories at their disposal by dint of the time they have had to accrue these. Gadamer says that “experience is what enables one to finally become an experienced person” (2001:52).

The issue of older learners is particularly relevant to this study: not in the sense of chronological age but in the sense of life-stage. The seaside area in southern England, where the study was conducted, mirrors *now* the age demographic projections for the *whole* of the UK in 2050. 43% of the population there is already over the age of 50, the unofficial start of the ‘Third Age’ or the newly-defined ‘third stage’ (50-75 years) of lifelong learning in the UK (Schuller and Watson, 2009). The ‘Third Age’ is considered to be the life-stage when people are generally free from the responsibilities of work and family, and have more ‘leisure’ time, to pursue chosen activities, e.g. learning of their own volition. Consequently respondents to my volunteer-recruiting efforts aged over 50 were favoured in order to have a *purposive* sample, although there were two younger exceptions (Fig.1:p.103).

Retrospection, recollection and reflection are part of the means to access the (subjective) ‘essence’ of the phenomenon of LLL. There is the question of deterioration of memory through normal ageing, but the absolute ‘categorical’ truth of historical events or ‘narrative’ truth in the portrayal of LLL is not a key issue in this study.

It is equally important to acknowledge that the ‘data’ (from Latin *dare*: ‘to give’) collected have been *granted* to the researcher only through the good will, commitment and engagement of the participant.

An interview is also a view *inter* (Latin for ‘between’) one or more people, with *interaction* between them. It is not a forum for an interviewee-led account as in the case of a narrative, life-history or bibliographic approach. Neither is it the place for the researcher to fire a schedule of prescriptive questions at the participant. Each interview in this study was contrived to develop organically as a dialogue.

In a hermeneutic conversation no one person tends to be in total control, as it tends to be consensual, interactive and focused on the matter in hand (Gadamer,2001), even if the interlocutors do not ultimately reach total agreement. The topic (the phenomenon) tends to be the guiding force, with the aim of understanding it better. Moreover I agree with Gadamer that the 'conversations' possible in an interview have "transformative power" (*ibid*: 60) for *all* concerned, and lead to self-understanding as well as understanding of the other. Practically I have drawn on Gadamer's model of conversation, whereby 'to be in a conversation means to be beyond oneself, to think with the other and to come back to oneself as of to another' (1989:110). According to Palmer (2001:12), this is not the same as Schleiermacher's: the 'father of modern philosophical hermeneutics' (*ibid.*), conversational model of understanding of the other person, where the "dark thou": 'the soul of the other... is to be penetrated psychologically' (Palmer, *ibid*).

3.5 First-person perspectives

The stories and mini-narratives given in the interviews may be seen as a device (i.e. method) to facilitate empathy through communication in which an individual can externalise his or her feelings and indicate which are most significant (Palmer, *ibid.*).

3.5.1 The role of language

Our access to these *first-person* points of view is facilitated and mediated in Vygotskian (1978) socio-constructivist terms through language, social interaction and discourse. Ricoeur writes that a language system is a necessary condition for communication in that it provides codes for communication, but it itself does not communicate, as the actual communication occurs through the discourse which 'refers to a world it claims to describe, to express or to represent' (1991[1986]:146). Language is the tool for me as a researcher to be able to carry out research, through dialogue with people and texts and my own writing, as well as constituting the substantive focus of this thesis and the subject I teach. The words themselves offer multiple ways of expressing concepts or ideas. The variable functionality and richness of possibilities with a

language: both with my own and that of others, represent its considerable attraction for me.

However it is not the language itself, nor the linguistic structure or norms of the discourse mediated through analysis of the linguistic codes or structures, which constitute the main interest to this study. The main focal point lies with the personal *meaning* and *value* to adults of learning a foreign *language*. Neither has my aim been to concentrate upon the personal attributes of the learners, or their own social contribution to the learning context. Nevertheless as well as the socio-cultural aspects, I have endeavoured to consider learners' historical 'learning *route*', to another language. This is what Mitchell and Myles (1998:188-9; emphasis in original) claim is missing in most sociolinguistic studies.

3.5.2 Connoisseurship

One answer to the research question lies with exploring the *experiences* embedded in the language learning histories of LLLs : their current and present or past encounters with a foreign language, and their future plans and imaginings. There is a timeless dimension to the data.

Moreover, I concur with Eisner (1994; 1998) and Dewey (1934) that our ability to *know* is informed by our ability to construct meaning from experience.

Throop and Murphy explain further:

To posit that a given representation is meaningful without examining how individuals construe meaning from it and attribute meaning to it is an exercise in futility (2002:195)

This emphasises why I have chosen to interpret LLL experiences from a *first-person* perspective: i.e. learners' accounts in their own words. Eisner (1998) gives us more direction methodologically, by referring to the art of 'knowing by appreciation', aka as 'connoisseurship' (from Latin *cognoscere*, to 'know'). Smith (2005) following Eisner (1998) explains that 'connoisseurship' allows educators a means to approach evaluation, by developing the ability not only to merely look, but also to see, and, ultimately, to understand.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) interpret Eisner's position of using both connoisseurship and criticism as accepting the personal, literary and even the poetic as valid sources of knowledge. This is echoed by van Manen (1997). Mark Freeman (2004) talks of more 'poetic' ways of approaching research, especially narrative research: more imaginative, creative ways of both sourcing and writing about the data. Narrative analysis he asserts is:

as much about the "possible as the "actual," its aim being more to *suggest* than *convince*, to open a "region" of truth rather to present a definitive one (2004:79)

This is a continuation of his argument (M. Freeman, *ibid*) that some of the writing about life narratives is more about 'appealing' to readers or audiences, rather than 'arguing' the case. This is 'based on the poetic resonances of the narratives in question, on their aesthetic texture and their evocative power' (M. Freeman, 1999a, 2000).

He writes too of moving beyond the 'rarefied atmosphere of the interview' (2004:73), which may be coloured by the researchers' questions and assumptions, in order to collect data elsewhere, e.g. from literary and fictional texts. Citing Ricoeur (1983), Freeman (*ibid.*) writes that doing this allows for other possibilities of *becoming*, by allowing a 'first-order reference' to the world to be suppressed, and for a 'second-order reference' to be disclosed. In so doing 'the empirically unreal and untrue thereby become a means of articulating the real and true on a deeper and more fundamental plane' (*ibid.*).

I agree with this particularly psychological perspective, and have drawn in particular upon two fictional works focusing on adults learning another language:

The first is Maeve Binchy's 1997 novel, '*Evening Class*'. In this she describes the individual and group experiences of an adult evening class learning Italian for pleasure and leisure in Ireland. Quotes from this novel, regarding individual 'reasons' for learning Italian appear at the beginning of each chapter of this thesis.

The second novel in question concerns its main character's journey of self-discovery in encountering a new language, that of Professor Gregorius in Pascal Mercier's *'Night Train to Lisbon'* (2004).

At the same time I am aware of the contentious nature of 'evocative' research, but further discussion of this issue is constrained by limits of time and space.

3.5.3 *The raw feel of experience*

Nevertheless the question of expressing the inner world and thoughts of another person remains. Each person's subjective perceptions, values, memories, and intentions are triggered by objective physical events and experiences in unique combinations.

At the same time humans are *language*d creatures and they live and communicate with other human beings. Language is usually dialogic in essence; individuals do not usually tend to have conversations with themselves. It is also framed sociologically, with the presentation of the 'self' as an ongoing social construct. At the same time this ability to see further into the experiences and minds of others: read them; 'appreciate' them, and relate them to our own perspectives and experiences, comes from an innate human ability to anticipate other people's thoughts and intentions. The neuropsychologist, Paul Broks explains that (2003:38): we live in complex social groups and as such our mental activities are mediated by the evolution of language. He suggests (*ibid*) that this has resulted in our ability to 'continually, and effortlessly, picture each other's thoughts and intentions', assessing what people 'have in mind': making sense of things by relating our own mental states to that of others .

However there is a caveat with this. Describing the nature or the essence of something as part of a general preoccupation with explicating phenomenal consciousness, i.e. the 'raw *feel* of experience' (Broks, *ibid*) may be problematic. Broks argues that this is 'invisible to conventional scientific scrutiny' (*ibid*: 140). It also may be doubtful as to whether we can properly articulate another's experiences. As Gadamer asserts 'we can never be sure, and we have no proofs, of rightly understanding the individual utterance of another' (1984: 57).

Another question is whether a researcher can truly capture the 'poetry of consciousness' which Broks writes, may be 'lost in interpretation' (2003:141) from first-person experience to third-person explication. This is the philosophical and methodological problem with researching consciousness of anything. Equally we cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience because thinking about it, changes the structure of the experience as it is perceived (van Manen, 1997). Broks (*op. cit.*) explains that you cannot be 'inside an experience (e.g.the chill of an autumn breeze) and outside of it at the same time'. For example, 'outside' of consciousness could mean telling another one's thoughts *about experience* through language. I agree with van Manen (*op. cit.*) that true introspection is impossible. His view of hermeneutic phenomenology is that it must perforce be retrospective.

Furthermore, Silverman criticises 'naïve' interviewers with a desire to catch 'authentic' experiences' (*op. cit.*:381). In practical terms, according to Silverman, avoiding this entails more 'lateral thinking', and a more critical re-reading of the interview data, taking into account the social and textual factors embedded and situated in interviewees' accounts and behaviour. It involves more than what Silverman terms 'simple-minded triangulation' (*ibid*: 382-383), i.e. merging simple statements of events with other people's accounts or observations of the same. It may also involve what he refers to as 'moral tales', which are 'powerful cultural forms' underpinning and justifying narrators' stories and accounts. Moscovici (2000) refers to these as "social representations" and comments that they may be informed by such artefacts as "common-sense" or "folk-knowledge".

Block (2000) also writes about the need to 'problematize' interview data, by going beyond a superficial content analysis of the data to consider more critically both the respective roles of interviewers and interviewees and the data themselves. Silverman (2006), Benson and Nunan (2004) all caution against seeing the 'actor's' (i.e. the research participant's) point of view as explanation in social science. This is in contrast to Freeman who urges us to take interviewees 'at their word' (D. Freeman,1996).

However in this enquiry, there is no quest for secret access to the authentic inner world of the learner. It is more interesting to consider what insights about LLL individuals can provide when they reflect, remember and interpret (random or interconnected events) in accordance with their beliefs and actions (Stevick, 1989).

3.6 Methods and procedures

The data in this enquiry have been collected by means of one-to-one, in-depth, conversational interviews with 15 individuals. The enquiry is *iterative*; a basic hermeneutic enquiry which seeks 'meaning and developing interpretive explanations through processes of feedback' (Grbich, 2007:20).

3.6.1 Contextual background

A description of the characteristics of general, rather than of particular settings for LLL is necessary for understanding the nature and context of LLL for this sample group. The participants' experiences of learning and encountering foreign languages have been variable and are detailed in chapter four, incident by incident, rather than by context or setting.

However, although *all* of the sample participants in this empirical study have learned a foreign language formally in an ACE setting (11 of them in the same German class) confining the study to consideration of only *one class* is limiting. All the participants have experienced foreign language learning in multiple ways and settings, and often of more than one language. These have included:

- accredited programmes in FE/HE;
- formal LLL in community (ACE) settings;
- private language-tuition;
- learning alone with home-learn resources;
- encountering native-speakers of the target language;
- language use on visits to/living in the target country.

Living in the UK, learners have to actively seek out these encounters with foreign languages.

The group make-up, the settings, and the dynamics of each LLL class are similar but also very different. Attendance can vary even from lesson to lesson

due to learners' differing personal commitments and the voluntary and unaccredited nature of LLL.

The biographical details given for each participant are limited. They are tabled in (Fig.1:p.103). However this is intended for use as an introduction of participants and their background information, rather than for any sort of factor analysis. In recounting stories of events and experiences at random times in their lives, adult participants can be unreliable regarding specifics, e.g. how many years they have learnt a language. As such tabulated bio-data becomes less relevant than the stories and evaluations which participants offer about their experiences.

The minimum criteria for recruiting the 15 participants were that they should: a) be over 45 years of age; b) have English as their first language; and c) be currently learning or have learnt recently (in the past five years) a *foreign* language, apart from English.

Despite a wide range of differing socio-cultural, educational and occupational backgrounds and a variety of life experiences, the participants were broadly similar in that they were mainly a) retired, semi-retired (in their 'Third Age') or not working, with leisure time to spare, and b) they had all experienced the British school system.

LLL courses usually consist of one two-hour weekly lessons in 10 or 12 week terms, not usually during the summer months. ACE language classes are available to everyone over 16 years.

In this local area, three ACE centres, part of the local FE college regularly offer French and Spanish, but also Italian, German and occasionally languages such as Chinese or Polish. Courses are normally for beginners or advanced learners with intermediate-level classes tending to progress organically from beginners' groups. Entry or progression to a more advanced class is sometimes problematic because of a lack of provision, or of insufficient learner numbers. Classes tend to be largely communicative: focusing mainly on conversation and

the situations encountered when visiting the countries where the target language is spoken. There is little, if any, formal assessment.

3.6.2 Data collection and analysis procedures

a) *Four ex-students of mine were recruited for three 'pilot' interviews.* These were conducted in relaxed conditions at my home, over tea. These interviews included those with three of my ex-students of Italian: Danielle and a married couple together, Trevor and Amanda, and an ex-student of French, Dan.

All of the data from these three interviews are included in the findings. The only amendment made for subsequent interviews was to refer to the prompt schedule of questions increasingly less with each interview (Appendix III).

b) *Unstructured, conversational interviews* were supplemented (randomly) with prompt questions (Appendix III), regarding key areas of interest in participants' language learning histories, such as: i) their early experiences and awareness of learning a foreign language; ii) their actual learning experiences; iii) the subsequent application of this learning; and iv) explicitly what they believe that they have derived from learning a foreign language.

c) This same schedule of questions was *piloted* in *written* form to 2 volunteers, one aged 17 years and another 63 years. However these were not used for analysis, as the interviews contained richer data and were more in keeping with the dialogic and interpretative HP process.

d) *11 further volunteers* were recruited from a local German evening class. This was made possible through collaboration between: me; a teacher colleague, Helga; an ex-student of mine in her class, Jackie; and the head of the local ACE centre, Debbie: all supportive to my research aims and interested in the findings. Debbie also provided background data on course-evaluation by language learners at the college (Appendix I). Helga and Jackie presented my recruitment letter (Appendix IV) to the class and secured commitment from 11 out of 15 of them (making 15 research participants in total).

- e) *10 further interviews* (in addition to the 3 pilot interviews) were conducted with the 11 German class participants, during the 5 weeks at the beginning of the autumn term (one with a married couple together, Angela and Roger). Interviews were held in mutually convenient places: six at the school where their lessons took place, an hour before the lesson; two in the lobbies of local hotels over tea; two at participants' own homes and two at my house.
- f) *Ethical procedures* were observed with participants: i) having a short verbal explanation of the research project's aims and protocol, and ii) being presented with a consent form (Appendix V) to sign before starting the interview.
- g) *Full transcriptions* (Appendix VII) were made of all the interviews, following the transcription guide (Appendix VI).
- h) *Initial analyses* of the transcripts were made. The transcripts were scanned for *units of meaning*, which consisted of excerpts of text related to LLL, participants' language learning histories and encounters with foreign languages. This preliminary but ongoing 'analysis' was a representation of the perceived *meaning* and *benefits* derived by each individual participant, as stated both explicitly and implicitly in their own words in the transcription text.
- i) *Pen-portraits* of each participant's language learning history (Appendix VIII) were sent to each participant. This was effectively my reader-friendly summary of the most significant related to LLL.
- j) *Response to the pen-portraits* was sought by telephone, email or mail. I received letters and email replies (see section 4.8).
- k) *Collective emergent themes* were drawn together by condensing and reducing the substance of all the pen-portraits together with any written correspondence from the participants regarding them.

3.7 Further ethical considerations

I tried to treat each participant fairly regarding the questions I asked and explanations about the research, gauging varying levels of interest and engagement. However, participants came to the interview with differing backgrounds and expectations and a different 'stock of knowledge' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) and existing relationship with me. Consequently each interview had to be treated with intuition and sensitivity, rather than with a formulaic or uniform approach. The aim was to build trust for a frank and open discussion of each person's experiences of other languages. It is notable that their different personalities affected how reticent or forthcoming they were with divulging or expanding upon the topics.

It is questionable how far it is reasonable to expect research participants to be involved, and how intrusive the researcher is entitled to be in their lives. The extent to which participants talked at length about their experiences in the interviews, especially about quite intimate and personal incidents, was surprising. This reflects Eisner's (1991) assertion that people want to talk to people who want to listen: implying that a 'voice' also requires a sympathetic 'ear'. However, the temptation to sensationalise the more salacious revelations had to be resisted.

Strangers met me at mutually convenient places with no inducement other than: the possibility that the interviews might contribute to knowledge through the research report; a cup of tea and a 'thank you'.

Although the interviewees were happy to give their time, their commitment to reading or responding to anything afterwards seemed to dwindle. The original transcripts were offered but none was requested. The issue was not whether something had been said, as the interviews were all digitally-recorded and transcribed in full, but whether there was a 'consensual validation' (Eisner, 1991) of my interpretations and descriptions as being representative of the 'rightness' (*ibid.*) of the interview reality.

All participants were informed that they, the teacher, the college and the area would be given a pseudonym, to preserve anonymity and privacy. One participant insisted that he be able to keep his usual name, which was respected.

The participants responded to my 'pen-portraits' by letter, email or telephone (section 4.8). Two participants did not respond, despite repeated telephone calls and emails together with the explanation that not responding was tantamount to tacit agreement to its content. It was necessary to respect unquestioningly their unwillingness for further co-operation, as in the ethical consent form it states that participants are allowed to 'withdraw at any stage'.

'Have you made any enquiries yet?'
'About villas? Bill looked at her wildly.
'No, about opportunities in banking, remember that's why we are learning Italian'.
Lizzie was prim.
'It was, in the first place, Bill admitted, 'but now I'm only learning it because I enjoy it.'

(Binchy, *ibid*: 487)

4. CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS

In this chapter the findings emerging from the pen-portraits and correspondence with the interviewees, have been grouped under six main topic headings. Evidence appears in each sub-section, mainly in the participants' own words.

4.1 Introduction

The empirical findings in this chapter are presented in response to the research question:

What does learning a foreign language 'do' and 'mean' for adults learning formally in community settings in the UK, from the perspective of learners themselves?

The presentation of the findings consists of my interpretations of the 'impact' and 'meaning' of learning and encountering foreign languages, drawing upon research participants' consciousness of their 'lived experiences' of the same. This is done mainly by citing learners' own words, representing the learner 'voice'.

The text consists of collective stories and themes, which have been distilled from the 15 'pen-portraits' summarising each interview (Appendix VIII), drawn in turn from the full interview-transcript (Appendix VII). These pen-portraits are evocative, giving a sense of participants' language learning histories, their backgrounds and their beliefs about their own 'leisure language learning' (LLL). In addition the pen-portraits give a flavour of the contextual factors of each interview. The interviews are illustrative both in their wholeness and in their parts through excerpts and citations.

The pen-portraits have been endorsed by each interviewee as being representative of their language learning history, together with their recollections of the interview itself. Participant reaction to the pen-portraits was solicited and given either by telephone, email or letter. This correspondence is cited where relevant throughout this chapter and discussed further in section 4.8. Notes providing information about: idioms, educational or social terms, particular to the UK are provided in the list of definitions.

Brief personal details introducing each participant are presented in the bio data table (Fig.1). This is provided to give a snap-shot of relevant details, giving an 'essence' of each person.

The intention is to evoke a sense of learners' experiences, by weaving in background and historical information about the personal stories and the learners themselves. The themes have emerged heuristically from the data: allowing the findings to *speak for themselves*, to a certain extent. These findings are descriptive statements of learners' experiences and meaning-making, rather than explanatory text. The nature and essence of LLL is implied rather than made totally explicit, allowing for alternative and further interpretations.

There are six main topic areas which have emerged from the findings:

- Identity;
- Cognition;
- Lifelong learning;
- Instrumentality;
- Language and culture;
- The social dimension.

Each of these six sections is illustrated in sub-sections by quotes and examples. Identifiable *benefits* are made explicit where possible, as the interview narratives were often both descriptive and evaluative at the same time.

Naming and grouping different benefits or categories is not intended to reduce learners to different *types* of learners; it is intended to identify only the different kinds of *impact* or effects of LLL upon learners.

Fig. 1 *Introducing the Interviewees*

Name	Age/ gender	Education Info	Learning status	Language/s learnt	Language contact	Job Info.	Background Info. Interests
Lyla (Ly)	63 Female	University Grammar School	Current German	Italian French German Latin Spanish	Portuguese	Retired teacher. Hospital worker	Widow. Son's wife - Austrian. Art Languages
Della (De)	63 Female	University Music College Grammar School	Current German	Welsh Latin German French	Dutch	Retired music teacher Musician	Musician, Choir pianist Music/ opera Classics
Hilary (Hi)	53 Female	University Grammar School	Current German	Greek German French Latin Spanish	Danish	English Teacher	Literature, Philosophy. Son has German girlfriend
Jackie (Ja)	72 Female	Bible College Masters State School	Current German Ex- student German	Afrikaans German French Latin		Retired SEN Teacher	Married to South African Baptist Minister
Neil (Ne)	46 Male	Schooling Interrupted State School	Current German	French German Spanish	Tagalog Chinese	Self- employed Plumber TEFL	Keen traveller Lived in China/ Philippines
Max (Ma)	45 Male	 State school	Current German	Russian German French		Citizen Advice Bureau Volunteer	Father - dementia. Reading literature Languages
John (Jo)	61 Male	Attended 13 state schools	Current German	German French		Trucker, soldier personal trainer	Lived and worked in Germany. People
Victor (Vi)	60+ Male	 Grammar School	Current German	Latin French Polish Flemish	Hausa Arabic	Semi- retired writer	Keen cyclist Travels by bike Polish wife
Bea (Be)	53 Female.	Grammar School	Current German	French German Spanish		Care Assistant PA	Lived Spain, German mother
Roger (Ro) (Married to Angela)	75 Male	OU Diploma & degree 60+ Grammar School	Current German	French German Russian		Retired credit controller. Ex -army musician	Lived in Germany with army & German wife
Angela (An) (Married to Roger)	66 Female	Nursing College State School	Current German	German Russian		Retired musician & music teacher	Music. Travel and culture in Germany
Dan (Da)	72 Male	Marine Engineering College Grammar School	Ex- Student French	French Latin	Ukrainian Russian Italian	Retired Marine Engineer	Travel and people Sailing classic Tall Ships
Danielle (Dn)	60+ Female	Unknown	Ex- Student Italian	French Italian	German Latin	Artist. Property Developer	Born USA. German Grandmother Art/ Music

Trevor (Tr)	70 Female	Left school 14 Mechanic Apprentice	Ex- Student Italian	Italian	German	Retired Business- man (Italian Car sales)	Freemasonry. Italy Trip. Job at Fiat. German girlfriend & lived there just after war.
(Married to Amanda)							
Amanda (Am) (Married to Trevor)	66 Female	State school	Ex- Student Italian	Italian		Retired Nurse/ Housewife	Family, People Italy Trip Had a stroke

4.2 Identity

The findings show just how mutable identity and the positioning of the self can be in relation to the various exchanges or scenarios both experienced and imagined by the participants during their contact with another language besides their own. The study also illustrates the psychological effects of learning/using a language on *self-esteem*.

4.2.1 Heritage links

Foreign languages have had an impact on several of the participants' identities, because of family ties or heritage links, or even due to where they have been brought up:

Danielle has good associations with her German background, remembering her German grandmother calling her *"little girl"* in German. She appears not to resent not having been taught German by her father, although as a child, she was mildly curious about her father's and grandmother's conversations in German. Although she expresses that she *"should"* learn German, because of her ancestry, she has never actively chosen to pursue this, not liking the *"guttural...sound"* of German.

Bea in contrast is driven by her German heritage, as her mother is German, and competence in German is a very *"personal"* issue for her. At the beginning of the interview she says that she is looking for *"a part of herself"* in choosing to learn German. She used to speak it fluently, living in Germany until 3 or 4 years old and visiting Germany often as a child. Having neglected it for many years, she is now frustrated as an adult at not being able to speak it proficiently,

“it’s kind of something that belongs to me.....and I’ve lost it because I didn’t keep it up...because it’s still there...but I haven’t got the vocabulary anymore...and also it feels like it’s been wasted, because it’s there and you’ve got to revive it”

At the start of the interview Roger attempts to explain things in fluent German, knowing me to be a German speaker. This recourse to a German *persona* is again evident when he states proudly that with his former German wife they had a *“two-language household”*. Furthermore he bemoans the *“tragedy”* that his own daughter cannot communicate with her grandmother as his ex-wife never spoke her native tongue, German, to their children, when the family lived in England. He appears to be pleased that his own *granddaughter* however is very *“keen”* on German, obtaining her ‘A’-level in German, as she is *“a quarter German”*, and it is a *“part of her heritage”*.

Della is unique in having spoken two languages at school and home: Welsh and English. According to her, this *“absolutely helped”* with the subsequent learning of French and German. She is scornful of *“upper-class people [paying] through the nose”*, to send their children to bilingual schools in Wales. She believes this to be due to the widely-held view that *“exposing children to two languages early on is good for them”*, especially when another language is *“on the doorstep”* as it is in Wales.

Furthermore Della says that she *“deeply resented”* that by opting to learn Latin in order to go to university, she missed out on being able to learn Welsh further at school: a language she enjoyed and which was useful for spoken communication in her everyday life.

4.2.2 Identification with/inclusion by the locals

Living or travelling abroad can fuel the desire to be identified as an insider in another country; be included as one of the locals, or even to adopt a ‘foreign’ *persona*.

Bea learnt another language fluently, i.e. Spanish, when living for many years in rural Spain, speaking only Spanish. She says of Spain that, *“I did call it home and I miss it desperately”*. She states that she likes her *“Spanish me”* better than her *“German me”*. She speaks Spanish well but describes the ebb and flow of her language competence according to *where* she is and *whom* she is with.

Bea illustrates the importance of her relationship to Spain, when she excitedly recounts a story of meeting some Spaniards in a pub in England. These people came from near to where Bea had lived in Spain, and gave her the latest news of the events and the people from *her* village: and her *“other life”*. She refers to the animated *“babbling”* with this group of Spaniards, with *“all this going on with the arms”* as *“just being Spanish. It was marvellous!”* Furthermore she describes then being mistaken for a Spanish person, by these same Spaniards, as the *“best compliment”* she has ever had.

John, too, appears pleased when he describes being mistakenly thought to be Dutch, rather than Scottish, when speaking German. He adds that a recent coach trip to Germany brought it all back to him: *“the Germanic way”*. He feels a certain kinship with the Germans as he believes that they and the Scots are similar in that both peoples say what they think and do not have *“airs and graces”*.

In a foreign language or culture it is possible to escape being *marked* by one's first language (L1) identity, reinforcing others' prejudices and assumptions about, for example: one's background; occupation; origins; or education.

From first arriving in Germany, John made the effort to find out some basic words and tried to use them. The theme of being persecuted against (particularly as a Scot and a soldier) and fighting the odds recurs in his interview, e.g. when he gets called a *“Tommy”* by a German colleague. John's identity as a competent speaker of the local language is important to him. Through his efforts to learn and speak a little German at the army base where he was stationed he was able to distinguish himself from the other *“squaddies”* based in Germany. John recalls how these soldiers *“never spoke a word of German”*, nor made the effort to go outside the army base or appreciate the German culture outside. Equally he infers that there is prejudice about the foreign soldiers from the local German people.

John returned to Germany later in life as an army truck-driver. He describes how he used to stop over at the guest houses for truck-drivers all over Germany. He says that without the language he struggled to understand and be

included, and that the only option was to “*stick your head in a book*”. Eventually he started to “*try and sort of go in with them*” (i.e. the other drivers), by attempting to speak a little German.

The need to be viewed as an insider, rather than as just a foreigner or soldier, is reiterated by Roger, as he too was stationed in Germany: as a young army musician in the late 1950s. He wanted to experience the German countryside and way of life, seeing any ignorance by other “*service lads*” of the “*lovely country, good food, good beer*” in Germany all around the British barracks as a “*waste of time*”. He states that there is a dual function to learning German, both for communication and understanding and also “*for getting to know the people and the land*”.

Amanda claims that she likes the feeling of being included, even if her own stance is a somewhat passive one:

She tells stories about her husband, Trevor, using some Italian to good effect in the shops or ordering in cafes. However, as far as she is concerned, she is happy to just listen and get “*the gist of a conversation*”, without particularly wanting to answer back.

Nevertheless she describes entering a church in Sorrento, where a wedding was being held. Here she enjoyed guessing the family relationships: e.g. who was the bride’s mother, etc. She explains how important in this case it was to understand the language:

“Just the words made you feel part of it really! Because you knew actually what was...going on...Whereas if we hadn’t learn Italian and didn’t know any words... we would have felt very isolated”

4.2.3 Expanding one’s identity repertoire

Speaking a foreign language, especially when others do not, affords LLLs certain *kudos*, and the possibility of adopting other identities. The participants’ experiences range from using a little of the target language to immersing oneself in a particular lifestyle. Some of the identity profiles here include: the *saviour*, the *show-off* or performer and the *Bohemian* artistic soul escaping everyday life:

As a German speaker John is able to step into the breach and help out in difficult communicative situations when he travels back to Germany. He describes his fellow travellers having problems communicating with the waitress as, “*typical Brits, like, y’know, ‘Everyone speaks English.’*” The benefit for him lies with feeling able to help out by translating: getting some satisfaction from his identity as the *saviour* and the only competent German speaker:

“It was also great when you were there with someone who couldn’t speak any German and you could....It was a right buzz! And I thought, “Look at me! I can do it!”

This aspect of being a communication *saviour* is reiterated by Dan when he steps in to help out a French couple he meets on holiday with directions in French. He describes it as being an opportunity to “*show-off*”. In spite of the negative connotations of this English expression, he defines ‘showing-off’ as “*showing, helping, and impressing people at the same time*”. Through this he says that he gets a “*sense of achievement and a sense of competence*”.

However the mood of communicative exchanges can quickly change from success to disappointment. Dan describes further how his satisfaction at helping this French couple out turns from a “*big high to a big low*”. He explains that the initial “*little glow*” at being able to help was somewhat eroded by the French people when they replied, speaking rapidly.

“You feel...inferior because you can’t tell what they’re saying, you don’t understand it all...then they assume you speak French fluently and they start jabbering away.”

After this point, Dan says he got “*lost*” linguistically and “*all flustered*”.

Danielle too talks of a compulsion to perform and being a “*very big show-off*” in another language. She is realistic about her level of achievement, saying that all she wants is to “*get by*” in a foreign language, contenting herself with small communicative triumphs, such as asking for her hotel room keys or ordering tickets on the underground. However, she loves to perform, by reading aloud in class and when travelling abroad.

There is the aspect of *escapism* to a more exotic or romantic self:

Della left England to live in Paris for a short while, after being treated unfairly in her teaching job, resigning and walking out. This allowed her to escape and to “*roam about*” Paris on foot; “*haunting*” art galleries and museums; doing her “*own thing*” and making do with little money: allowing her to redefine herself in a new ‘Bohemian’ lifestyle.

4.2.4 Self-esteem

There is clear evidence of the impact that speaking a foreign language has on participants’ sense of self and their self-esteem. They recount incidents that have been both positive for and detrimental to their psychological well-being. This involves a need for adults to experience ‘success’, on their own terms. Through being able to perform in the language, either for communicative reasons, or for some private engagement with a text, satisfaction may be derived from being able to understand and being understood. Issues of self-consciousness or avoiding *humiliation* appear in the interviews, as well as indications of interviewees’ judgement of their own aptitude for language-learning:

Danielle says that the reason she has learnt Italian is in order “*not to make an absolute idiot*” of herself, minimising the risk of looking foolish in social interaction. She is self-disparaging about her ability, lamenting that she is “*useless at languages*”.

Della initially felt “*ashamed*” at having less German than her foreign visitors had of English, and not being able to communicate with the German choir with whom her town does a regular twinning exchange.

Lyla describes the process of trying to communicate, drawing on all available resources:

“It gives me more confidence. Even if I am not very good at it I feel like if I can hold my own...in the class, I feel more confident by the fact that I can do that and...that that would then [give] me the ability to go to another country, any country, and have a go at speaking any language”.

Lyla believes that this confidence has come exclusively from going to language classes, as she would not have attempted this before, having been too scared to speak. Previously she would have written it down but would not have spoken.

LLL is about discovering success and *a sense of achievement*. It is clear that learners' self-esteem is boosted by the small triumphs they experience, often when practising their language skills.

Angela says that:

"All round it gives me a buzz to think that I can... understand...a sense of achievement".

Jackie says that she is motivated partly by a sense of success in being able to communicate in German. She recounts a story of being in a shop in Germany, where the shop assistant told her quite rudely in German that she should choose a larger size of waistcoat than the one she had selected. Instead of being offended at this she was amused, explaining that she felt a *"real buzz"* that the shop assistant did not resort to English. She admits to going shopping in Germany or Austria not only to *buy* things but for the *"experience"* of being able to talk in German.

When asked what he got out of the Italian classes he attended, Trevor says that it is *"an inner feeling"*, which is difficult to explain. When his wife Amanda, in the joint interview, suggests a *"sense of achievement"* he agrees.

Lyla talks of being able to read and write well, having been taught to do so at school. On holiday in France she could read the explanatory signboards in French, even if she could not understand what people were *saying*. She describes the excitement of eventually discovering that she can in fact communicate in another language:

"Then I got two occasions to go to Spain, and I found I actually spoke Spanish when...there... not very fluently or anything but I could get by...I felt brilliant! ... I liked the fact that someone could understand me, and then that they would speak slowly enough for me to be able to understand them. And I thought, "I can nearly have a conversation in another language!", and...that was really exciting!"

4.2.5 A sense of purpose

Additionally the participants want to establish themselves as having a *purposeful* leisure pursuit, as well as being *perceived* as doing something worthwhile. The benefits from this vary from individual to individual.

Danielle says that she likes *"learning for learning's sake"* and *"knowledge for knowledge's sake"*. She continues that she thinks that *"you should learn a*

smattering of most things" and that anyone can benefit from learning. She points out that the Italian she has learnt is not necessarily relevant or useful to her, but this does not matter.

Trevor is involved in Freemasonry and learning is very important to him. He states, *"Man seeks knowledge, doesn't he? That's the thing!"* He comments that his recent Italian class has given him *"an insight into new knowledge"*.

Dan says:

"It's a way of getting out for a couple of hours at night in the winter and meeting fresh people. It's interesting".

Bea remarks that by going to the classes, she distinguishes herself from others, who do nothing at all:

"You're doing something with your life....constructive....at least you can say, 'I'm...out learning a language'."

Victor elaborates that he is definitely not a *"pub-person"* who goes and does the normal *"macho thing"* by drinking beer in the pub. He likes to keep busy in a purposeful way and he says that he is *"always learning"*: other things as well as languages, e.g. playing the trumpet. He says that *"life would be pretty boring...if one is not learning."*

Jackie says explicitly that she started to learn German because she says that she wanted:

"something to get teeth into....of interest...to stimulate my mind, really."

She expresses that she did not want to be *"a couch potato"*, either mentally or physically after having given up work. This is an identifiable benefit in that she says LLL keeps her *"mind active"* and gives her *"something to aim at"*.

4.3 Cognition

Many of the participants talked about the perceived effects of learning a language upon their brain; mental activity, or upon other learning:

4.3.1 LLL and illness

One of the most revealing stories recounted concerns Amanda:

Amanda had originally come to my beginner Italian classes with her husband, Trevor. Her experience of the mental effects on the brain is significant, as six months before starting her programme, she had suffered a stroke.

Trevor has clear ideas about what they both got out of the class and what effect the class has had on Amanda. He explains that coming to the class was an active step because,

“What happens with people with strokes is they sit back and give up and I’m sure that’s not the way”.

Trevor continues that with the progression of the course and the “*new words*” of Italian, Amanda was remembering progressively more and more. Additionally he became more confident of her ability to cope if she found herself on her own during their fore-planned trip to Italy.

These new Italian words and talking about Italian culture were creating, he repeats, “*new dialogue*” between him and Amanda; in that they did not just dwell upon familiar subjects or Amanda’s illness. It created a new space, giving them both “*a new opening*”, as Italian was new for them, although Trevor was, as Amanda explains, *renewing* the Italian he already knew from previous classes.

Amanda explains that, although she does not feel that she was very good at Italian, having lost confidence in many things after her stroke, she enjoyed participating in the classes. She also liked the challenge of learning new words in Italian especially when there were comparable words in English, which she was re-building after her stroke. Although she says that she thought she was “*taking it all in at the time*” (i.e. the lesson and the language), she often found that she had, and still has, problems with retaining things in her brain. After 12 hours, she admits, what she thought she had learnt was gone. However, she says that just thinking of something different and “*alien*”, such as the Italian words, meant that this was not “*competing with anything else*” in her mind (i.e. her recall of English) as she recovered from her stroke.

Another reference to the positive effect of language learning upon the brain is given by Max. In the interview he states that, due to his late father's illness with severe dementia, he has become very aware of the issues of suffering from this or related diseases. He says that he would like to hope that learning a language is *"certainly a way of keeping [his] mind active"*. In terms of whether this is actually working; Max concedes only that learning German is keeping him *"busy"* and his mind *"fairly active"*.

4.3.2 Perceivable cognitive impact

Several participants comment on the perceived effects of language learning on their mind and thinking:

When asked whether his conscious effort to learn German has been useful to him, Victor says that it *"activates the brain a little bit...helps the mind"*, especially linked to all his other learning and activities (e.g. painting and drawing). However he says that this is not necessarily because he *"feels"* this to be the case, but *"imagines"* it to be so.

Della states explicitly that one of the benefits she has derived from learning a language as an adult has been that:

"It does exercise your brain; there's no doubt about it. I do feel....it keeps your brain cells alive."

She is clear about the type of mental effect that language-learning has; explaining that with her Welsh lessons at school, she liked *"deciphering it"*, because it was *"like a kind of code and puzzle"*.

Lyla comments too that she finds this *code-breaking* aspect of understanding a foreign language *"kind of exciting"*. She describes this desire to understand what people are saying, as trying to *"break the code"*.

Hilary articulates her views about what learning a language can do to the mind, from her own experiences,

"It gets your mind moving...I think, you can get perhaps stuck in a 'study rut', by...focusing on those areas you've always worked on and...that you know you're a specialist in, and....actually to have a real experience of learning a language exercises your mind in a different way and...communicatively it really

sort of expands...your mind and the way you operate.....with the mental concentration...and the discipline it involves”.

4.4 Lifelong language learning

Discussing their childhood experiences of other languages is a natural part of participants looking back on their own life experiences and their autobiography. It appears that earlier exposure to a foreign language has influenced participants’ current/recent learning activity. This legacy of earlier language learning extends beyond LLL to other areas of learning and being:

4.4.1 School language learning

Several of the participants did not have good experiences of language-learning at school, resulting in different reactions to formal language-learning later on as adults. Often this is linked to issues of *choice* and *volition*, as LLL involves free-will and agency, rather than *obligatory* language-learning at school:

Dan points out that with LLL:

“We come to you and learn French because we want to....Whether it’s recreational French or normal French, I don’t know, but nobody’s forcing us to come; we are actually paying to do it, but we enjoy it.”

Bea says that in spite of her early grounding in German, she did not enjoy academic success at school. She says this is more because she was a “very, very lazy student...a naughty girl...always skiving” for all of her subjects, not just languages. She describes her school experience of languages, as being only grammar and “really, really boring”. She contrasts that with her current learning in that, not only is there “*interest in it*”, but also that it is her “choice”.

Max had a *negative* experience of learning French at school, which has had a lasting effect on his own view of his ability to learn languages. He says that the short period of learning French from the ages of 11-13 “*taught*” him that he was “no good at languages”, and that he had “*no aptitude*” for languages. This is something which he says that he has not “entirely got over now”. The legacy of this is *regret* that he has wasted time when he could have been learning a language. In a long letter to me he wrote:

Especially in view of the fact that if I had not been left with such a negative view of my language learning abilities I may have started studying foreign languages significantly earlier in my adult life than I have done.

This has had practical implications for Max, because, if he had started Russian earlier in London, he would have had recourse to Russian lessons, which are not widely available in the area where he now lives. However he feels that his knowledge of linguistic structure and grammar has grown during the intervening years, in a way to make his current Russian-learning easier.

Despite finding French an *“utter bore”* at school and wanting to be *“done with it”*; Max was determined to go to adult French classes. His determination to persevere with learning French was due to a *“sense of unfinished business with it”*. In a way this represented a challenge, but also he explains that *“you shouldn’t be hostile towards it....it’s not the fault of the language”*. He has recently had a disappointing grade from a French exam. He is resigned about this, alleging that *“it goes right back to doing it at school”* and *“having to do it”*.

Jackie did not enjoy her schooling, and found that she was not *“good”* at French. However, five years after finishing school, things changed in that she became religiously converted and strongly motivated to improve her qualifications in order to be able to go to Bible College. With support from her church minister and his wife, she managed to get three ‘A’-levels. At the same time she went to evening classes for French because she *“needed a subject”* to get into Bible College. She talks about being *“highly-motivated”* to learn French because she *“wanted”* to go to Bible College.

Equally *positive* experiences of language education at school can underpin a lifelong interest in language learning. This is the case for several participants: Victor brought in his school report to show me at the interview, pointing out his academic success at school in both French and Latin. He is clearly proud of his talent for languages. He comments that as learning French and Latin was obligatory at school *“it started him off thinking about other languages”*.

At school Dan made a special effort for his French schoolteacher, as he treated Dan *“like a human being”* and had *“a unique way of getting you to do things and*

you'd try harder". As a result Dan achieved an excellent grade for French at school, in comparison to *"scraping through"* all his other subjects. He adds that he never thought that he would *"need"* French, but he *"got the habit...just enjoyed the challenge....got on terribly well"*. He still *"perseveres"* with French classes aged 72 years.

Hilary talks about learning French early at primary school, where she felt *"privileged"* to have had *two* native-speaker French teachers with distinctly different regional accents. She describes exploring a different language as *"quite an adventure, really"*.

Della comments upon the quality of Welsh teaching at school as being *"sharp and specific"*, fun like *"game-playing"*. She also refers to her *"brilliant"* French teachers.

4.4.2 Educational 'catch-up'

Lyla expresses some strong opinions about education in general. She talks of the lack of educational opportunities for some people:

"There's an awful lot of adults, especially older adults, who left school young...because that's how life was!...It wasn't their choice.....and now, when they're older, at any age really, but especially when you're retired, you think 'Right I can start doing all these things I didn't do before'...It is like a 'catch up'".

Roger illustrates Lyla's point. He explains that after living in Germany and being married to a German woman, he harboured the intention to learn German properly for roughly the next 30 years, although he did not actually do so until he retired. He describes the *"self-satisfaction"*, which doing an Open University (OU) Diploma in German gave him at the age of 60. He explains that doing a qualification *"formalised"* his learning.

This is repeated in John's interview, when questioned as to whether his current learning of German feels like educational 'catch-up'. He describes going to a *"rough, old school"* as a child and attending 13 different schools. At school, he says, if *"you answered a question, you got beat up at playtime"*. However he still enjoyed learning French at school, and he says that he took to speaking a foreign language fairly easily, *"like a duck to water"*. This little French knowledge

was useful to him at about nine years old during a trip to Belgium with his Judo club. He says that this little bit of French really “*boosted*” him as he was the only one in the YMCA camp who spoke some French. It gave him confidence and he “*loved it! Loved it!*”

He says that he believes that, “*you’re bettering yourself through education*”.

German is the only subject in which John has gained a formal qualification: an ‘O’-level, as an adult, which he admits gave him a “*thrill*”.

Both Neil and John discovered that despite the odds they were good at languages at school:

In Neil’s case his schooling was interrupted by an accident and he did not “*get on so well with French*”. However, right from starting to learn German at school, aged 13, he proved to be “*quite good at it*”, and was “*top of the class*”. He also practised his German on a school exchange to Germany. Here he struggled with speaking German, with his exchange family not speaking English to him. Nevertheless it “*paid off*” for Neil. He describes speaking German on the exchange as “*wicked...really good*”.

4.4.3 Being older

As 10 out of the 15 participants are over 60 years of age, it is reasonable to assume that *age* or being *older* might make these learners conscious of any age-related limitations in their learning. However the subject of age/ageing does not present itself as a major issue or problem. It is mentioned as it relates to everyday life, minor constraints and historical changes:

Dan reflects the nature of many adult learners with their conflicting interests and commitments, saying,

“I would love to force...or condition myself to take a bit further and learn a bit more, but I don’t...I learn, just enough to get by and then, I sort of forget it, I should carry on and do a bit more, but I’m probably being busy, and I’ve got so many things on...Too old! That’s what it is!”

When asked his future plans for learning, Dan says that at his age he does not plan too far ahead. In his view, he has worked hard and achieved his “*three*

score years and ten" (70 years) and from now on he wants to enjoy himself, looking forward to the passing of each year in turn.

The oldest interviewee, Roger, at 75 years old, also mentions how busy his life is. He states that at his age he misses hearing spoken German; especially in the area where he and his wife, Angela, live. The class gives him the opportunity to hear spoken German by a native-speaker, Helga, the tutor.

Angela comments that as she is getting older, by attending class she is not, *"stuck in front of the telly doing nothing, which [she knows] is wrong"*

Both Della and Lyla comment that they have problems with their memory now that they are both in their sixties.

Bea acknowledges that it is difficult coming to language learning *"late in life"*: (i.e. 53 years old). She recounts that with the teacher, *"it's in one ear and out the other"*: entailing Bea writing everything down. She comments that teenagers like her daughter get into the rhythm of studying. Bea has lost this habit by being *"away from it for so long"*.

The other aspect of being older is that it opens up opportunities to retired people. As well as being a case of *educational catch-up*, it is also a question of changing times and intergenerational disparities: the differences between *then* and *now*:

Amanda explains that growing up in a remote part of northern England she had almost no contact with any foreigners at all. However she comments that for her children and grandchildren, it is now much easier to acquire languages, as there are more *"opportunities"* to learn and use languages, as well as to travel more. She describes how: her granddaughter lives in Cyprus, speaking Greek fluently; her daughter and son-in-law are learning Greek; her other granddaughter learnt Spanish, and her two daughters learnt French at school. She says that she thinks that:

"languages in school now [are] essential because children have to know about....and be able to communicate so much with other languages and other cultures".

In contrast she says that in her and her husband, Trevor's youth, life was much "*more structured*" and there was less freedom, mobility and choice.

Neil is surprised by the advanced age of the class overall. He says that he cannot really understand why the "*older people*" are actually there in the class when they are "*already good at German*".

4.5 Instrumentality/ non-instrumentality

Adults initially enrol in LLL classes of their own volition for complex and multi-faceted motives. The learners often have *specific instrumental reasons* for attending a LLL class, e.g. travel, family or work. In some cases there is a deficit or pressing *need* to learn the language. There may be a task or occasion (e.g. writing an important letter or going on holiday) for which learners require some use of another foreign language: for communication; for comprehension or for both. However it is interesting to discover the participants derive benefits from their language learning in many other *non-instrumental* ways as well, e.g. academically, intellectually or aesthetically:

4.5.1 An academic/intellectual interest

There is evidence of several of the participants' interest purely in the *language* itself, as separate from any other socio-cultural factors:

Max is interested in languages in themselves, saying that for the past three years his study of languages has been "*rather time-consuming*". He talks of having:

"A certain fascination with how languages basically all do the same thing....because they're essentially communicating the same information for the most part, obviously in very different ways".

He talks about his "*intellectual fascination*", with how languages "*work*". He adds that he tends to have a "*logical, structured way of thinking about things*." His interest in languages consists of an "*academic fascination*" with languages, especially Russian, which he has started to learn recently, rather than a "*practical application*", because he has no plans to ever visit Russia. He has read a lot of eastern European and Russian literature in translation, and has

started to learn Russian independently over the past six months, specifically in order to be able to *read* it.

Della is interested in language and linguistics, demonstrating her knowledge of the workings of language. She needs to know the grammar, the “*mechanics*” and the systems to understand how the language “*is supposed to go*”. For example she talks about the fact that German has “*bolt-on ‘Meccano’ words*”, with compound words beginning with prefixes such as “*ein*” and “*aus*”. She comments that some class members are “*completely lost*” when it comes to talking about grammatical terms such as “*subordinate clauses*”, because they do not have the “*vocabulary*”. She believes it necessary to have the “*concepts*” of this grammatical meta-language.

Jackie too says that she is fascinated by the “*systems*” in language learning. She too gets frustrated and “*shocked*” by the ignorance of linguistic structure of her fellow class members. Jackie views her solid grounding in *English* grammar, i.e. knowing how to “*tear sentences apart*”, as preparing her for LLL.

Angela stresses her interest in the “*academic side*” of language learning. She too likes to know “*how things work*”: the theory and the systems, and her learning to be “*structured*”. She talks of compensating for a lack of understanding or confidence in speaking by striving to get her own utterances grammatically correct; she has “*got to get it right*”.

Nevertheless Angela admits that it “*really annoys*” her not to be able to understand what people are *talking* about. Ultimately, she admits, her insistence on using the right ending or gender of a word is “*silly*”, as,

“The whole point of a foreign language is to make [yourself] understood rather than knowing the grammar”.

Danielle is also interested in language for its own sake. She is proud that she can understand British regional dialects, and explains that she is interested in the evolution and development of languages and words. She also loves the “*look*” and the classical associations of Latin and the fact that it is the “*root of language*”.

4.5.2 *Aesthetic benefits*

There is also a sense of appreciating a language in an *aesthetic* way: a much harder to define visceral feeling of a language as being appealing and pleasurable in its own right:

Della describes French as being,

“A most beautifully elegant language... something very refined...distilled”.

She is surprised to discover poetry and romance in the German language which she had expected to be “*crass*” and “*not flow*” for her.

Della says of opera that she feels that listening to music with on-screen translations somehow “*demeans*” and reduces the feeling of the original words.

The “*sound*” of a language is very important aesthetically to Danielle. She loves to “*read aloud*”, even without understand totally understanding what is written, e.g. when reading French newspapers. She believes that the best way to learn another language is to learn it in the country where it is spoken: describing how your ear may become attuned to it quickly and you get the “*feel*” of it.

In the same vein, when asked directly what gets out of LLL, Bea says that she gets “*real pleasure*” from the sound of the language and from “*listening to foreigners speaking*”, without necessarily *understanding* it.

Lyla describes an early memory of learning French at the age of 6, whilst doing embroidery with the French nuns at her school, who used to give the children simple instructions in French. She was fascinated by it and the fact that it sounded “*much more romantic than English*”.

When her children were older, Lyla learnt some Italian at her workplace. She found that Italian was “*beautiful to listen to*” and led to her learning Spanish.

However on the other hand, there are other participants, such as Neil and Dan who, however hard they are pressed to outline any meaning beyond the instrumental benefits of language learning, are reluctant to attribute any profound significance to their own LLH.

Dan admits that, although he loves the French people and their “*outlook on life*”, he is not attracted to the French language itself as he finds it “*confusing*”. He scoffs at my implications that there is some “*sense of personal development or change*” through language learning. He says that he is “*not a deep thinker....does not analyse things*”, being “*more practical*”.

For Dan it is enough to get by and make the connection with foreign people without investing much effort perfecting his French. French is more “*useful*” for him than anything else.

He wants to enjoy the LLL and not take it or himself too seriously. Dan does not want to make French seem like conscious effort: being keen on enjoying his retired life unburdened by work. He concedes that if he really wanted and needed to improve, he would *read* more French.

4.5.3 Specific communicative needs

There are a range of different tasks and circumstances, which have motivated the participants to start learning a language formally. The *instrumental reasons* include: being able to cope; avoiding problems and practising/rehearsing what is needed for communication. Often this is associated with travel:

Amanda and Trevor came to Italian classes in order to prepare for their “*Grand Tour of Italy*” in 2005. Learning Italian gave them a sense of readiness for this, in terms of being prepared for how, as Amanda notes, “*busy*” Italy is; for recognising any potential cultural differences, and for knowing what to expect. For Amanda, learning Italian was a “*pleasurable aim*” for their holiday. Trevor explains,

“I think it gives you the confidence when you’re in these countries, but not to have.....intellectual conversations, but just to have communicationand, you’ve got the safety factor...you can communicate in some way if you need toabout handling your luggage and things like that...just throwaway conversation!”

He also says that that he felt that it would have been difficult to have taken Amanda to Italy *without* any preparation, because of her previous stroke.

Amanda perceives having Italian to be a coping mechanism as well, and she likes the fact that she could have managed on her own, if really necessary:

"It means ...if I'd [ha]ve got separated from Trevor, I would've at least had some idea.....of how to cope...that is what came across for me when we were learning it, the fact that [I] would've been able tocope if I've had to. I wouldn't have dreamed of going up to somebody and trying to have a conversation with them, but if I'd' [ha]ve had to.....I mean if I was on my own....and that's the secret, I could've done."

Learners may enrol for language classes in order to travel, live or work abroad:

This was the case with Dan, a retired marine engineer, who sees his learning in practical terms, almost as a tool. He started off with needing French in his twenties for working on a French boat in France. As all the ships' crew were French, including the chef, Dan explains that *"if you wanted food, you spoke French!"* More recently, because of his involvement in sailing classical tall-ships to France for regattas, he has taken up learning French again. He has needed French to be able to write *"begging"* letters to the French authorities for funding to attend regattas. His elation at first securing funds of 2000 Euros is clear, *"Whoopee! I've cracked it!"*

Roger and Angela have many friends in Germany and travel there regularly. Angela says that it has been *"much more satisfying"* for her to shop in Germany after learning some German, now that she knows enough German to be able to ask somebody to slow down or repeat something, if she does not understand.

Neil wants to improve his German as he is returning to Germany on holiday with his partner in the near future. For Neil it is important to learn a language because it is going to be *"useful"*. He is quite scathing about people in his German class who do not appear to have a proper *"reason"* for learning:

"There's people who come into school and they got no point, or reason for learning it. I was chatting to a guy the other night...I don't think 'e's ever been over to Germany...Well, he's just learning it, and I think, "Well, it's a bit sad really!" You've got to have a reason for it!"

Neil himself is quite definite about why he is learning German now, and what benefits he derives from it:

"Well, I was good at it, I like it, and I went to Germany".

However learning a language is not always motivated by travel:

Della started to learn German because she helped with the practical communication for travel exchanges between two *“quite elderly choirs”*, whose towns in England and Germany are twinned. Additionally she is now able to translate the German song lyrics, helping the English choir, for whom she plays piano, with their pronunciation of German words. However, despite this, Della admits to having no *“Wanderlust”* for popular tourist destinations. She did not travel much when younger because of family circumstances. She prefers to *imagine* what cultural cities like Venice or Vienna may be like: having an *intellectual and academic* interest in travel.

Max talks about the family circumstances influencing his language learning history:

Even from his schooldays Max says that he was not interested in French as he was *“brought up very much in a monolingual household”*, with his father being *“relatively xenophobic”*. Max qualifies his father’s sentiments as regarding mainly Germans, because his father had been a child evacuee, and his paternal grandfather had been killed in the Blitz in London. This resulted in Max’s family not travelling abroad together, partly because of not having the *“requisite financial resources”*, but also because of Max’s father’s *“thing”* about foreign countries being *“somewhere you go to fight wars rather than...on holiday”*. After his father’s death, Max travelled a little with his mother, but does not recount these experiences with any perceivable pleasure or enthusiasm.

Some command of the language is important if you are working or living abroad: John describes the problems caused by lack of understanding when living and working in Germany. He ended up driving a large truck down a closed road, because he could not read the warning sign in German. However, he does not see learning a language as *“risk management”* in any way. He thinks that *“you have to have a sort of sense of adventure”* and that when he gets himself into predicaments, he just *“deals”* with the consequences. For example, John says that, after trying unsuccessfully to understand the other truck-drivers in a popular trucker *“food shack”* with limited German, he realised that could not continue saying, *“I don’t understand”*. Afterwards he vowed to *“try and grasp”* what the Germans were saying, and learn more. He acknowledges that one of

the direct benefits that he has derived from LLL is that he now knows that he can go abroad and “*hold [his] own*”.

Trevor’s initial experience of the instrumental benefits of language learning as an *adult* was when he worked for the UK division of an Italian car-manufacturer. Through his work he had Italian friends and mixed socially with them. Having no idea about the Italian language, culture or Italy, he decided to learn Italian at classes.

Through working with the Italians he not only got experience of working with the food and culture which the Italians brought both to England (even bringing their own chefs), but also he gained knowledge of their way of “*commercially operating*”. He notes that the Italians he encountered were “*artistic*”, and “*talented*”.

On a practical level, Trevor could not understand the literature that came through from Italy or recognise the numbers necessary for commerce and therefore needed to learn some “*basic things*” very quickly, by starting Italian lessons. However he states that if you are going to “*retain*” the language, you have got to *practise* it and travel.

Neil describes how he travelled extensively for a long period in the Far East and taught TEFL in China and the Philippines. Although he emphasises to me that he was doing this purely as a way of “*getting money*”, he said that not only did he “*pick up*” different cultures at the same time, but he learnt about other subjects which were taught in the medium of English, such as “*biology and stuff*”.

4.5.4 Skill acquisition/ maintenance

Attending a LLL class is often about the desire to acquire specific skills or maintain existing ones: improving written language/grammar (Victor and Bea); practising listening (Jackie and Della); pronouncing Italian properly (Danielle); understanding spoken German (Angela); developing confidence to speak more of the language (Lyla); or having an opportunity to practise the language (Roger, Dan, Amanda, and Angela).

John enrolled for the current intermediate German class because he wanted to at least remember, if not enhance, his existing German, which he has not used for a while. He would then like to return to Germany and be able to speak to his German friends in their own language.

Victor clearly states that he does not come to the German class for the “*social aspect*”, which he differentiates from the “*learning*” aspect. He attends because he wants to “*continue his German*”. He clarifies that it is not just a case of ‘brushing up’ his German, but of being able to “*continue and to improve*” his German. He has travelled extensively and regularly by bicycle to the German-speaking countries, and has German-speaking friends. Consequently when he initially returned to England with a “*smattering of German*”, he wanted to,

“Keep the continuation going....because if you start learning a language and you leave off for years it becomes hard to get back to it...once....I’ve grasped some of the language, I don’t want to lose what I’ve...got”.

He builds upon his knowledge of German by attending classes. Using a cycling metaphor, he describes language learning being like a wheel on a bicycle, which you have to keep turning, or else when you “*put the brake on*” it is difficult to start off again.

Neil talks about building upon and bettering the “*little knowledge of German*” he already has. He has no intention of being a “*teacher or anything*” but he likes to be able to speak German and “*would like to take it to a further level*”.

Danielle enjoys attaining a “*skill*” when she learns: “*just being able to do it*”. She says that the reason that she took Italian seriously initially was that she wanted the “*skill bit*”. However, her enthusiasm waned after numbers at the language classes dwindled. As a consequence the classes became smaller, becoming more “*fun*” and more social. She made good friends in the class: even holidaying in Italy with them. She enjoyed this, but it resulted in the “*learning*” becoming less important. Having no means of assessment, e.g. a test, seems to have impeded her sense of progress, especially as she admits to liking exams.

4.6 Language and culture

Language in itself has had an interesting impact upon the participants. There are various attitudes within the sample group regarding focusing on the *form*, *structure* and *linguistic elements* of their target language.

‘Culture’ is allied to language here in two distinct ways:

The first aspect of *culture* is embraced by an intellectual and artistic interest in the *grand culture* and the cultural artefacts, such as literature, art and music, etc. in the target language. The second is constituted by an interest in the *everyday culture*: the people; the customs and ways of being/living in another country. Culture is embraced in different ways by the participants.

There are also varying opinions about the study of *Latin* and clear indications of preferences for/affiliations to *different* languages:

4.6.1 The Latin influence

Latin is discussed in many of the interviews, which is unsurprising given that 7 out of the 15 participants attended academically-selective ‘grammar’ schools. However, the range of the participants’ educational backgrounds is wide. For example: Angela emphasises that she did *not* go to a “good” grammar school unlike her husband, Roger, indeed she stresses that she went to a “very poor school”; Trevor left school aged 14, to attend technical college and John moved around to 13 different schools.

‘Grammar’ schools were originally conceived in Britain specifically to teach Latin. Studying Latin at grammar schools was also desirable for taking an academic route to university in England between 1950-1990: a significant influence for the retired teachers in the sample, e.g. Della, Lyla and Hilary, who went onto higher education. It also appears that studying Latin has had an effect on further language study for participants, whether of English or of other modern foreign languages (MFL).

The Latinate languages such as French, Spanish and Italian tend to be the most popular choices of LLL classes in this part of England, and all of the participants have been exposed to learning French at some point, except Amanda. Although Latin is a *dead* language, and no longer spoken in contemporary usage, and although the focus in this research is on *modern* foreign languages, it was clear in a lot of the interviews how important (and largely enjoyable) Latin has been to many of the participants. There is clear evidence of its influence on language learning and MFL and English literacy:

Victor is pleased that he did Latin at school, as other schools did not “*bother*” with it. He notes that Latin is especially “*useful for other languages*”, which are now a “*big thing*” in his life.

Latin appears to have given some of the interviewees a basis for mastering linguistic structure and form:

Jackie says that Latin helped her to learn the tenses and gave her a “*basis*” for knowing about grammar.

Lyla emphasises her “*love*” of Latin: about it being “*structured*”; being able to “*get hold of the rules*” and knowing what she should do with it. She implies that she is in control of this aspect of her learning, as well as there being comfort in the fact that Latin is predictable and stays the same. Lyla also traces the interrelationship between the Latin languages she has learnt: going from Latin and French to Italian and then to Spanish. She describes how Latin has helped her, with English as well, as “*it’s there in the back of so many words*”, and “*in the stem of things*”. This has enabled her to look at new words in other foreign languages and guess their meaning. This was also an intellectual activity that she shared with her late husband.

Della says that learning Latin for her was a “*wonderful basis for understanding English*”, in that it helped her to parse sentences and understand the linguistic and grammatical structures of English, which were not so immediately identifiable.

Hilary enjoyed learning Latin at school too. She appreciated its logical format, as it has always been easier for her to learn when something is “*logically clear*”. Although she states that Latin “*could seem a little daunting and unfamiliar*”, she has found it invaluable in understanding other languages, especially her own, as well as providing a good introduction to grammatical structure.

In contrast Bea states that she feels herself to be at a distinct disadvantage at *not* having learnt Latin, and she envies some of the other class-members’ greater knowledge of linguistic structures and terminology.

4.6.2 Language structure and form

The varying attitudes to the learning of grammar are often influenced by learners’ ways of starting to learn a language:

Lyla comments that there is a dichotomy between the two different routes into learning languages, i.e. the difference between learning to *speak* first (often naturalistically without instruction) or starting off by learning the grammar,

“I think it goes into two types of people, those who can learn to speak readily... And those who like the grammar and will gradually learn to speak. I think you need to know which you are... so if you know that, you can choose whichever language appeals to you, either by the sound of it or, or private lessons or something just to get a bit of a grounding in it.... You do need some grounding of grammar; you do need to understand the grammar, but...you really need to...just use it, as part of the language you talk”

The German class attended by 11 of the interviewees appears to include a lot of grammar content. The issue of grammar-learning is mentioned by many of the participants:

John does not like being “*hit*” with meta-linguistic and grammatical terminology, with which he is unfamiliar. He feels that the class expects too much of him, as his *spoken* German is so good. He asks me to explain what the grammatical term ‘the infinitive’ means. He points out that he has learnt German by “*instinct*” and “*feel*”, not by knowing the linguistic structure.

Neil laments that he is finding the German grammar “*a bit difficult*”. He allies himself with John, who is “*the same*” in having difficulties with the grammar and linguistic terminology. John helps out when Neil asks him questions, as he has

heard things *“time and time before”*, having lived in Germany, and knows what *“feels right”*.

Both men state that they want to persevere and carry on with their German lessons, with John even saying that he may like to learn Italian. However, in the interim, I have since discovered that both men have discontinued with the German class.

Victor comments that he found the structural side of language learning at school and even now as *“a real drudgery...the verbs and the grammar”*. He attributes this to suspected dyslexia.

Bea initially acquired spoken German naturalistically as a child, rather than learning it formally. Consequently she has struggled with the grammar and more structured aspects of German, especially after years of not using German. Initially she did not understand some of the grammar terminology used by others in the class. As a consequence she started going to Helga, for private one-to-one grammar lessons. It also means that she now *“absolutely loves”* her group German lessons as she says,

“The grammar is coming to me now...it’s all making sense. It’s just great! It’s really good fun!”

She is pleased that she’s *“cracked the system a little bit”*. She does not really like learning the grammar, but intimates that it is a *means to an end*. She likes now being able to keep up better with the rest of the class, but still finds it a little confusing.

Lyla too went to Helga first for private grammar lessons, before joining the group lessons. Lyla explains that she is not very good at *speaking* German because she *“can’t think of the words very quickly”*. She had also had a language education at school where the focus was on reading and writing, resulting in her being *“hot on grammar”*.

Lyla finds that she likes languages with recognisable patterns and structures, such as German:

Ly: ...I suddenly thought, "Yes, I actually do like this language!" It's structured! ...it reminds me of Latin! It's got rules, and y'know...
 Re: What does that structure do for you?
 Ly: It makes, I dunno, it's like feeling safe or something...
 Re: And that you can navigate your way round?
 Ly: Yes. 'Cos you know what you're supposed to do. And OK there are irregularities, but it's mostly regular....I could work out the grammar.
 (Re=Rebecca; Ly=Lyla)

4.6.3 Culture

The language and the culture of the target language are mostly linked, but learners have different ways of reacting to information beyond the language itself. Some participants mention aspects of *grand culture* such as literature, art, and music, etc. and others are more interested in more *everyday aspects* of life, e.g. the people and their way of being and living:

Danielle relates her love of the Italian language to her knowledge of Renaissance painting and art history. She is keen to learn Italian to enable her to pronounce Italian painters' names, paintings and hometowns correctly.

Learning French and about art at school: nurtured by the teachers and getting books from the library, had a "*profound effect*" on Della. She is open about the fact that she is "*naturally anti-social*" and that she prefers cultural artefacts (such as books) and experiencing foreign *places* to forging relationships with *people*. She describes living in Paris as a younger woman, whereby she visited the museums and art galleries alone, but not "*particularly lonely*": passionately detailing the human and cultural exhibits she saw. Similarly she enthuses about a recent trip to Vienna, Austria, where she was "*bowled...over*" by the "*culture*". At the same time she describes the people she met on her travels relatively dispassionately.

Hilary recalls that she particularly enjoyed the "*literary aspect*" of French at school. Both she and her sister still reminisce about a French school textbook. She says that she enjoyed the "*historical*" and "*more imaginative themes*" in this textbook. Hilary explains too that there was more emphasis on *written* language at her school than upon speaking, with progression in the subject leading to more "*formal translation exercises*". As a consequence she feels that her knowledge of French to be "*a little bit more literary and formal*" to the point that

she does not feel as if she has “*absorbed everyday colloquial French to the extent....that they might now*”.

Nevertheless Hilary enjoys reading, and is currently slowly reading some heavyweight French literature, to keep her French up to scratch, along with some children’s stories in simple German.

Equally Hilary believes that *grand culture* should be studied in the original language, rather than in translation, which might not capture the “*feel*” of the original. She justifies this by saying that she does not really hold with having a text interpreted “*second-hand*”.

She understands her particular attraction to the German language lies with the fact that she believes that it is a “*culturally very important language*”: associated with culture and philosophy, as well as it being renowned for the richness of its music. She says that she thinks it sad and “*shameful*” that in previous centuries an educated British person would have known so much more about other European literature and cultures, compared to this century. She pronounces herself “*very ignorant*” of German literature and culture.

Both Roger and Angela emphasise liking the food when they travel to Germany, and Roger loves the landscape. Roger clearly feels a kinship with the Germans, which he declares that he does not feel with other Europeans. For Roger, “*under the surface*”, the Germans share the same sense of humour as the English well as many features of daily life, e.g. catching the bus. There is the sense that Angela and Roger both like the similarities that they find in the German way of life in that they can feel foreign and ‘at home’ at the same time, Angela comments:

“*You’ve got this sort of pleasure of knowing that you’re in a foreign country but you don’t feel alienated because you can understand....what’s going on around you. You can read the road signs.*”

Amanda likes Italian because it has “*good associations*” for her. She also appreciated being able to recognise or guess snippets of everyday conversation in Italian or odd words on the television during her and Trevor’s trip to Italy. ‘Culture’ is something that Amanda repeats as being important to her. She explains that:

"If you learn a language you also learn about where these people live and about their culture...I think the language and the culture and everything that goes with it, is very important".

Amanda defines the benefits derived from language learning, as being *"multi-functional"*. For her this included being in Italy; continuing to learn the language, and being *"introduced in lots of different areas to a language"*: learning about the food, the culture and the people as well.

Amanda says how much she and Trevor both enjoyed the aspect of classes incorporating both language *and* culture, i.e. the traditions and mores, as this became a *"whole package"* and *"fun"*. As such they found that they *"could take it all in"* as well as it being interesting: allowing them to feel confident about trying things e.g. Italian food in English supermarkets.

4.6.4 Language preferences

For a different reasons and circumstances, participants have varying and strong reactions towards the different languages they have learned, as well as the issue of using English in conversation with foreigners:

Max finds French a lot *"harder"* to learn, because he was not as interested in French as is he is towards the other languages he is now learning, i.e. German and Russian. He wrote to me that his strong preference for German has surprised him, with the consequence that his progress in German has been swifter and his knowledge of it has surpassed his earlier knowledge of French.

Lyla says that she prefers Italian as a language, even though she has learnt less of it, from the *"sheer sound of it"*.

Although Hilary does not particularly like the sound of German, preferring the sound of the Latin languages, especially French, she likes to hear German sung, e.g. in opera. She notes that German just has a different character and *"feel"* to French: *"a different attractiveness"*: more guttural. She likes the fact that German is both a phonetic and a logical language; and likes reading it and pronouncing it.

John mentions that he would have preferred to have learnt French but circumstances, i.e. living in Germany for twenty-five years, have resulted in him wanting to re-learn his German. Lyla too would have learnt some more *French*, if her son had not got engaged to an Austrian girl.

Danielle explains that although German might have been the logical choice for her to learn with her family background, she has chosen to learn Italian rather than German for *aesthetic* reasons, e.g. loving *the “musicality... passion... expression”* and even the accompanying gestures of Italian.

She is unsure of her motivation for having enrolled in French classes, but says that she thinks it was because it is *“probably most [English] people’s second language”* and she felt that she *“should learn it a bit”*. This was despite her not being *“drawn”* either to France or its people.

Danielle describes resorting to English when she is lost late at night with her daughter in a run-down area of Paris. She was able to communicate and resolve the problem only through the *force* of her actions, rather than speaking French *correctly*, which she thinks she would have been unable to do linguistically under pressure. Danielle says that she was surprised to see that using English did not antagonise this situation in Paris.

The dimension of communication, and resorting to speaking English, seems fraught with complications as to who may practise their language and it sometimes appears to be a power struggle. A common refrain emerging from the interviews is that when a foreigner speaks English, in communication with them, it can be both an irritant and a relief:

Neil explains that although it can be *“polite and handy”* when Germans speak back to you in English, it is a shame because *“you want to be able to practise your German”*. Equally he notes that some English people just expect the Germans to speak English. Neil tried to learn Spanish to visit Cuba but it was difficult when he went there as *“everyone just wants to speak English”*.

Roger highlights the fact that often in Germany the local people are “*keen to practise their English at you*” meaning that he and Angela have little opportunity to practise any German when they travel there.

Hilary comments that she believes that English people are largely handicapped in their endeavours to speak a foreign language through lack of practice and opportunity. Recounting a trip to a pilgrimage destination in Spain she bemoans the problem arising on this particular trip: a perennial one especially in multilingual groups, i.e. that there is a default to English as the *lingua franca*. This entails little opportunity for English-speakers to practise other languages they may be learning. This highlights the ambivalent situation where there is almost a contest of language competence, even if underpinned by goodwill and the mutual intention to communicate easily.

Hilary explains that in Austria, as many of its German-speaking people have good English, she found that the tendency was for them to reply in English to her attempts at speaking German. She considered this to be “*a little rude*”. Although she can understand foreigners’ frustration at somebody “*speaking to them slowly and falteringly*” in their language, she is frustrated by not being able to learn by talking more in German.

Jackie made the decision to “*brush up*” her French by listening to self-teach tapes whilst doing the housework. She needed French for holidays with her daughter after discovering on her first trip to France that, “*Parisians won’t speak English*”. Initially she had found it “*horrible*” to not have been able to be understood searching for the correct platform at the railway station. This resulted in her and her daughter returning from their travels “*shattered*”. On subsequent trips she has been more able to “*get by*”, which she says is alright for French. However, she cares and is “*bothered*” if German people do not understand or reply to her in English in shops, as she “wants” to speak German.

Interestingly when there is a need to get a more vital task done, then Dan explains that he feels it important to have a *lingua franca* which most people understand, like English. He cites the lifeboat emergency drill on ships as an example of this. He also describes struggling to accept local coastguard

guidance in French, whilst navigating a large sailing-boat into a dangerous harbour in France. He was initially flattered that the woman in the harbourmaster's office had praised his French. However he was later irritated to discover that as she evidently spoke English, the recognised *lingua franca* of the maritime world, she had endangered him, his crew and passengers by *not* using it. Dan emphasises that that there is a quantum leap between communicating in French in the classroom and being at the helm of a large boat in the wind: a dangerous predicament, requiring practical as well as mental concentration.

4.7 The social dimension

People do not normally speak languages to themselves. LLL is one area of learning where practising *all* four key skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) requires interaction with one or more other person. The themes of *human-relatedness* and *making a connection* with others are important ones. There is clear evidence in the interviews of how interacting with others effects the participants. There are three areas here where the social dimension of learning and using a language can be studied:

Firstly there is the influence of *significant others* upon the participants, in their learning of one or more languages.

Secondly there is the interplay and contact with people in the *wider world*, when LLLs apply their learning.

Thirdly there is the interaction and group dynamics with others in the *learning environment* itself: normally in the class.

4.7.1 Significant others

The close ones in learners' lives, such as family and friends, are shown to have an effect on learners' decisions and activities. There is evidence of: *joint endeavour*; *supporting another*; *sharing an interest* or forming an *intimate relationship* with someone:

Jackie initially started German classes by default because her husband was learning German, and she joined him, as the class for which she had initially enrolled did not run. Her husband had started his German class after major misunderstandings about self-service in a railway buffet, had perturbed him, during their previous holiday in Austria. Jackie brought the written account of this in German along to the interview, submitted as an assignment in class.

On the other hand, Jackie has been frustrated in her attempts to learn Afrikaans, her husband's L1, by her husband mocking her pronunciation so much that she *"just couldn't stand it"*. The issue of the difficulty of learning from or teaching a close one, especially a child or spouse, recurs in the interviews with Lyla and Hilary.

There is also the dimension of not wishing to be excluded with or by 'significant others'. Angela describes how, because her husband, Roger, had previously been married to a German woman, she felt left out when her husband spoke in German to his former wife:

"Because she wouldn't speak English; and her English was brilliant but when we first knew each other- they weren't together....she refused to....speak English in front of me."

She also rebukes her husband in the interview for trying to conduct the interview with me in German. More positively though, learning German in the class has helped her with their trips to Germany, in that she can now understand their German friends more on her own terms, rather than relying upon Roger to translate for her or *"muddling through"* with communication and feeling *"awkward"*.

Although this is the first time that Roger and Angela have actually come to a class together, Roger says that they *"do learn together"*. Angela explains that Roger came along to German classes to keep her company. Roger confirms that his motivation for coming to class has been to help Angela improve her German. She in turn describes how they have both learnt some Russian together, after a trip to erstwhile East Germany. There is a sense of *joint endeavour*.

Lyla's son got engaged to an Austrian woman. She was then invited to Vienna, Austria to meet her son's future in-laws. Believing that she should not go without any German, she started to learn the language at short notice.

Max's mother took an active interest in Max's French work at school, even going to adult French classes to help Max: even completing homework for him. He believes that the fact that his mother learnt French, has kept him persevering with French. He says that not only has *his* recent learning of French kept his mother happy by keeping her "*on her toes*", but there was the practical advantage of twenty years' worth of accumulated learning resources. He suggests that his mother's reasons for learning were that she liked it and was also able to "*get out of the house*": getting away from his father for a few hours. She stopped classes only after the onset of Max's father's dementia.

Hilary joined the German class because of her son. As he had a girlfriend who was half-German, and was spending some time in Germany, he had started to teach himself German. Hilary decided to accompany her son to Helga's classes. Although her son has since stopped going to these classes, Hilary has "*stuck with it*" for the past two years. There is a strong incentive, as she can practise German with her son and his girlfriend. She plans to spend the following Christmas with her son's girlfriend's mother in Germany. She is looking forward to it, partly because she will have a chance to practise her German.

The issue of having had *very close* contact with foreigners arises with some of the participants:

Trevor, Roger, and Neil all had relationships with foreign women in their youth, either on school/sporting exchanges or when stationed abroad in the army. Both Victor and Roger married a foreign woman when younger: a Polish girl and a German girl respectively.

Neil refers to an intimate relationship with his German school-exchange partner's sister. He also had a relationship with a girl in Indonesia, describing how they drew pictures as they could not speak each other's language.

Hilary had a Greek boyfriend, who consequently helped her learn some Greek, in addition to her using a Greek self-teach course.

In addition Victor was engaged to a Flemish-speaking Belgian girl and states that he has always been *“involved with women from other countries rather than this country”*, i.e. England. He declares,

“When you’re engaged to a person of another country....naturally you’re going to learn some of the language”.

For Victor this contact with Flemish extended beyond his fiancée, as he was staying and eating with the family and learning the language naturally. He describes that learning spoken Flemish in these circumstances was *“quite a jolly learning system”*: not about *“drudgery”* or grammar-learning. He also picked up the spoken language from Flemish friends who were *“sympathetic”* to his mistakes. Later, Victor married his Polish wife and she *“persevered”* in getting him to go to Polish classes when they lived in Warsaw, Poland.

Trevor learnt some basic German in a similar vein, almost incidentally from peers and *“human contact”* and meeting *“the girl”* (his wife’s, Amanda, reference to his girlfriend at this former time: emphasised with real disdain) when on a football exchange to Germany, aged 14. He loved the German way of life, returned to Germany later, and almost gave up his life in England to live there in the early fifties. Regarding the language he emphasises that he had no intention of *“pursuing it on an educational basis”*. Communication with *“the girl”* was not a problem for him, in spite of any language differences. He demonstrates to me in the interview that he has retained some German, and has used it practically with his current involvement with Freemasonry.

4.7.2 Applying LLL in the wider world

The pen-portraits demonstrate some of the effects of using a foreign language for social communication beyond the classroom. The themes that emerge include: *human relatedness; politeness/ courtesy; making the connection and broadening horizons.*

Relating to others is very important to John. He admits that he has always liked the idea of meeting people from *“foreign lands”* and that it would be *“great”* to

talk to them in their own language. However he says that liking speaking a foreign language is simply because “*he likes people*”, especially foreigners.

Dan explains that he likes to *make a connection* with people. He prefers a face-to-face response, rather than the delayed reaction of writing and sending a letter in French. Dan sometimes uses a phrasebook for learning a few words of a *new* language, such as Italian for a recent trip to Venice, but he prefers human contact. For example on a recent trip to the Baltic, he describes how a waitress on his cruise ship, despite the general medium of communication being English, “*took great delight*” in teaching him some Ukrainian for his short time ashore in the Ukraine. This was a difficult language for him along with Russian, which he also attempted.

Lyla recounts a story about *human relatedness* whilst speaking Spanish in Spain, which transcends a mere exchange of information:

Ly: I remember asking somebody for directions to...a railway station...I sort of rehearsed in my head, like you do...I stopped someone who looked local...she was very polite and I had two goes at saying it, then she realised what I meant...and she was explaining where to go and I could...read the directions so that was OK, and then she suddenly asked were we having a nice holiday...I just felt so pleased that she followed it on with that...

Re: So it wasn't just a question...of getting it all done and finished?

Ly: No, she actually asked if we were having a nice holiday...I thought, “Oh, that's so nice!”, and I almost forgot to answer. I was so thrilled with the-

Re: You were so thrilled with the sort of flow of conversation?

Ly: Yeah. And I thought this is lovely and this is why people learn another language so you can actually do this, and have this-

Re: Relate to somebody?

Ly: Relate to someone.

(Re=Rebecca;Ly=Lyla)

Lyla also expresses how pleased she is with the encouraging reaction to her trying to speak German. She describes how people on her first trip to Austria for her son were tolerant, even when she spoke imperfectly. They did not make her feel “*absolutely useless*” at it and appeared pleased at her attempts to speak German.

Hilary says that the legacy of learning Greek from her boyfriend is that she has been able to use her knowledge of Greek on subsequent holidays to Greece. With great enthusiasm, she describes walking around in the Greek countryside and being able to say “*good morning*” and “*thank you*” in Greek. She thinks that

the locals were pleased at her attempts to communicate. It is satisfying for her to have retained a few phrases for communication, rather than to have no Greek at all. She says:

"Much more satisfying 'cos you make a connection with the local people and you show that you've taken the trouble to attempt to speak to them in their own language....obviously, it's on a very simple level, but I feel quite proud when I've...absorbed a phrase, I remember it, and perhaps I can use it again... Whenever I go abroad, I like to try and make a bit of effort to.....to learn at least some phrases and words".

She says that this means that *"you are no longer a detached observer"* and that you appear as *"someone who wants to make a connection"* and who *"respects the culture"*.

The importance of *politeness, courtesy and respect* for the host, the country and the language to LLLs are also highlighted. Dan explains:

"It was only polite to go to a country and say "please", "thank you", "good morning"...It's a way of being polite to go to a foreigner with a few words of his language, which puts you in a better light. They probably appreciate it".

Someway between courtesy and pragmatism Trevor says that in his dealings and contact with people from Germany that he believes that what he got out of the *"German experience"* was that,

"If you've got serious involvement with people you should try and meet them halfway, and that's what I got out of it".

Victor talks about the importance of having even the most basic expressions such as asking directions, the time or greetings. It not only helps with communication, but *"it breaks the ice"*. He agrees that it is down to *"courtesy"*: his personal *"philosophy"* being that,

"People are more inclined to smile...it's almost rude to ask in English all the time. If one goes to another country, you should try to speak....at least some basic words".

He has made an effort when travelling to have a smattering of several languages, even more unusual ones for British people, like the African language, Hausa or Flemish. He claims that it *"just helped the situation"*, rather than making him feel *"better or greater or smaller!"*

This has made feel him less *"inhibited"* about communicating with people. Travelling everywhere by bicycle means that travel is slower for Victor and he

can stop more to talk to the locals. He says that he was able to communicate with the Tuareg people, a nomadic desert people, whilst travelling across the Sahara, either in a smattering of French or in some basic Arabic words. As such he believes that they could see that he was trying to understand their culture and speak their language. For him, learning about a country and its people, *“goes along with the language”*. He reasons that going up to them in the desert and speaking in English would be *“confrontational”*.

Danielle reiterates that it is important to be polite by knowing basic phrases when going to a country, such as *“Thank you very much”*. She decided on a recent holiday to Spain that she wanted to learn a few phrases, or possibly use a phrasebook to be more competent for future trips to Spain. However she is not engaged or interested enough in Spanish to want to go to *classes*.

Lyla repeats that she dislikes going to a country, with nothing of the requisite language. She learnt a few basic phrases of Portuguese before going to Madeira for a fortnight. She says that in doing so she felt *“polite”*.

She also explains that her daughter-in-law’s multi-lingual family have a rule which concerns *“politeness”*, i.e. always to talk in the language, spoken by the majority of the people present.

4.7.3 The learning environment

For the most part the participants’ LLL takes place formally in the classroom, although they refer to other experiences of learning e.g. self-teach courses; learning autonomously or using phrasebooks/dictionaries. There are references to the *broadening of horizons* and social circle; *being prepared* for the unexpected; opportunities to *practise*; learning and *experiencing new things*; *interacting* with others; *supporting and measuring up against others* and *extending knowledge of the target culture*.

Della describes her social life before coming to German classes as having been constricted to *“narrow”* academic and musical circles. Despite admitting to being *“naturally anti-social”*, through her attendance at the German class Della has met a *“completely different ...mix of people”* These are people with completely

different interests, who she admits that she would not have “*found*” any other way, and whose “*culture*” she is now more likely to understand. She is happy to keep returning as one of the “*core group*” who have kept the class viable with sufficient numbers, as well as tuning her ear to the *new* class members’ variations of speaking German. On a more personal level she describes the “*bonding*” within her German class, particularly in supporting a class member who was seriously ill.

Hilary describes how the class has exceeded her initial expectations when she first started. She explains that:

“It’s opened the world to a more interesting extent than I might have expected it to...it’s not....just a question of trying to master structures and so on, but it opens up German culture and makes it more accessible...you realise how you are enriched through learning more about ...the country that produced the language”.

For the future Hilary says that she would be happy to have a “*taster*” of a range of different languages. However the only question is having the time and less importantly, the money. She says that,

“You could do a bit yourself, but...learning alone is in isolation obviously and that’s...not very satisfactory”

When asked what are the most important things that she has derived from language learning, she lists: the mental stimulation; opening up cultures; contact with others in the class, especially from a mixture of different backgrounds and finally an opportunity to broaden contact with speakers of the target language.

Trevor likes the fact that *culture* was introduced into the class as part of the language learning, for example; the introduction of Italian food into the lesson for learners to taste.

Regarding the future, Lyla says that she may possibly try learning French formally again, having studied it extensively at school. As she has only done a little travelling so far in her past six years of retirement, she would like to do some more. She has had quite a lot of experience of many languages (French, Latin, German, Portuguese, Spanish and Italian). She claims that this love of novelty and experiencing a few languages means that she has got a “*broader*

view of languages”, although she admits to getting bored quickly with continuing to learn just one language.

There are other benefits that come from the social nature of the class:

Victor has been coming to his German classes for about four years, and has “*stuck together*” with the same group of about eight people, who also have been attending for the same time. He likes the fact of knowing these students from the previous year. He explains that he would find it slightly intimidating to join a class with “*all new people*”. However, he is keen to point out that they are not “*close friends like that*”: exchanging pleasantries or being part of what he refers to as a, “*pub-club*”. Nevertheless he is not enthusiastic about self-teach CDs or the BBC television language courses. He also likes Helga, the German tutor, and feels comfortable enough to be able to ask her questions about German grammar, which has improved for him with the classes.

Despite the problems involved with a “*huge gamut of experience and ability*” amongst the people in the class, going to classes has enabled Della to have a lot of practice of speaking and listening in the classroom. According to Della, “*the experience of listening in class is something you can’t get enough of in a class.*” She has used self-teach CDs on long car journeys, but states that she finds this way of learning “*sterile*” and prefers to go to class because she can “*interact*” with other people, get the “*unexpected*” and listen to other people’s voices.

The problem of too much academic heterogeneity in the class also strikes Roger and Angela. Angela says she feels sorry for the teacher who has to cope with students’ wide range of abilities and linguistic knowledge. Roger intimates that he is not learning much because his German is better than the others.

Jackie has strong opinions about learning autonomously. Although she had tried to learn German with a textbook, she never continued with it partly because she knew,

“It’s no good learning from a book; you have to be in a situation where you’re conversing and listening”.

One of the benefits for Jackie from joining her German classes was that it was “*purely social...something to do*”: to meet people when she and her husband moved to a new town. However, she admits that this impulse to join a class has been only partly social, because although the class is a “*pleasant group*”, she has reached the point in her learning where she has learnt enough to want to improve and speak “*with ease*”, as well as socialise.

Neil has not found the German classes easy, but by listening to other class members, he can understand more than he can speak. He says that “*you’re picking up things all the time....so that’s good*”. He feels quite daunted when asked to describe what he has done the previous week in the class, trying to remember *what* he has done as well as the German words. He says that he feels a little embarrassed about speaking out in class in front of others, who he does not know.

As far as the actual Italian learning in the class was concerned, Amanda was “*quite happy to come along and be part of it*”: without necessarily performing or speaking the language, where she could passively “*admire*” more able and outgoing students. She talks about “*listening*” being important to her, explaining that she lacks confidence because of her stroke.

Bea “*thoroughly enjoys*” the group lessons and is still “*learning stuff*”. She describes having a cup of tea and chatting with the other “*nice people*” in the group. She also comments that her course is very “*cheap*”, representing good value for money.

Max states that going to classes enables him to “*hear*” German spoken. However although he says that his ability to read has improved, his ability to actually comprehend *spoken* German has “*lagged behind*”. He describes learning with CDs at home, whilst doing housework, although he writes that they do not really work for him on their own as he needs ‘*recourse to textbooks*’. In his long letter to me he writes,

I would agree that I find learning on my own at least effective if not more effective than learning in the classroom environment, particularly in the early stages of learning a new language.

Nevertheless he feels that he is disadvantaged in learning Russian as he has no native-speaker teacher to ask about the language, even for just reading.

Lyla has also tried to learn French on her own with discs, reading books and a dictionary, without much success. She believes that it was “a very academic exercise” and says that she is not sure how it would help on a trip to France. Whilst acknowledging that learning on your own is good to make initial progress, especially one-to-one with a teacher, she describes missing the *social* aspect of learning with a group of people. She says that practising and talking German in front of other classmates, makes her more confident and is enjoyable because of the mutual encouragement. She stresses that this social benefit of learning could not be obtained through the computer or otherwise, especially as the latter would entail being at home on her own. She also mentions missing her late husband. Added to which this learning socially happens in a way that it is “*unobtrusive*”, in that she can choose how far she wants to interact personally with her classroom peers.

When the digital recorder was turned off Lyla says that an additional gain she had derived from the class was the feeling that the class was a “*leveller*” with everybody in the class being equal and all doing the same thing. However Lyla explains that one *disadvantage* of attending a language class is that she is forced to go at the pace of the others, waiting until they have caught up and understood. Nevertheless she says that spending longer on some learning ensures that she and the other faster ones have really “*got it*” as well as they had originally presumed.

Hilary is part of an informal French-speaking group which has been organised in her village, where people meet up and meet in different people’s homes and speak French together. This arrangement is “*very social*” for Hilary.

She describes how she benefits from her current *German* class:

“The...social experience is very helpful, sort of mutual support...and you learn quite a lot from...other people, how they’re using German and...it’s fun...and...relaxing. It’s...an extra attraction, that friendships and contact that you make....with people....and obviously having a native-speaker, an experienced teacher, teaching you is extremely helpful”.

The learners also refer to the literacy aids that are normally associated with language learning, such as phrasebooks and dictionaries. The reaction to using them for referencing language, especially when travelling, varies greatly:

- John does not like phrasebooks because they have “*funny German*” which makes his German friends laugh;
- Victor says that they are inconvenient because usually by the time he has retrieved his phrasebook out of his bag, the moment has passed;
- Danielle’s phrasebook remains unused in her bag because she does not want to “*look like a tourist*”;
- Roger and Angela do not use phrasebooks or dictionaries as they do not feel they need to;
- Amanda says that she does not want to lose the pleasurable challenge of “*trying to think*” about speaking Italian, by using a phrasebook;
- Max uses his dictionary to look up things after hearing or seeing something unfamiliar;
- Victor does this too: making notes about the language which he then refers to when he has spare time, e.g. in the doctor’s surgery;
- Lyla says that she likes to buy a phrasebook to try to learn phrases before going on holiday.

4.8 Validating the pen-portraits

In the second phase of the research process, after the participants had received their individual pen-portraits, their responses to me via email, telephone and letter were revealing:

After receiving their pen-portraits, two of the interviewees, Bea and Neil did not respond at all, despite many telephone calls and emails.

The majority of the respondent reactions were *positive* about the interpretations and the interview process, along with pointing out minor technical or factual corrections, which have been incorporated into the above findings. They wrote:

Thank you for allowing Amanda and I to view the transcripts [sic] of our interview with you. We are amazed by the clarity, accuracy and choice of words used to describe instances from our memories. Our recollections in almost identical content surprised both of us...especially as interviews can easily become distorted and appear embroidered. [We] are perfectly happy for you to use this material in any way that will assist you’. (Amanda and Trevor, letter, including a DVD of their 2005 trip to Italy);

Thank you for the transcript (if that’s the correct terminology). I thought it was very professionally done and found myself somewhat honoured you’ve taken the time and trouble to listen to me. (John, email);

It is fine. You have summed up my motives, feelings very well indeed. It wouldn't make any difference to the tone of it or your conclusions if you left it just as it is. However I will correct a few unimportant details...I haven't forgotten the conversation or you and....with your ability to listen and empathise (Jackie, email);

However not everyone was complimentary or happy with the interpretations: Max wrote a long five-page letter responding to each point in the pen-portrait, correcting the tone and the facts of some of the information. He had clearly taken the trouble to read the pen-portrait very carefully. I made all the changes accordingly.

Victor also made some minor critical and factual amendments to his pen-portrait, as to how things should be expressed. He was also adamant that his name, Victor, should be used and not a pseudonym.

His mother had thought that learning Italian was a great idea. It was a beautiful language. She loved to hear the Pope speak it, and she loved the song *O Sole Mio*. His father had said that it was great to see a boy bettering himself all the time.

(Binchy, *ibid*: 124)

CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION

In this chapter the six key themes illustrated empirically in chapter four are discussed as they relate to the literature in chapter two. General issues and pedagogical implications are also considered.

5.1 Introduction

In keeping with the methodology and ideology underpinning this thesis there is no definitive conclusion as such to be drawn from this descriptive enquiry. This study presents just *one* qualitative interpretation of how the reality of the phenomenon of 'leisure language learning' (LLL) is perceived in *one* particular context: that of older (45 years+), British language learners attending evening classes in southern England.

This interpretation is to be viewed as a 'horizon' (Gadamer, 2001) to be 'fused' with other 'horizons', i.e. other perceptions or consciousness of the phenomenon of learning an additional language later in life. As such this study's methodology and findings could be legitimately and practically transferred to other contexts.

In addition this is not a discussion concerning "methodologically "assured" results [to be passed along] free of questions" (Gadamer, *ibid*: 53). He maintains that we are not necessarily able to 'wrap up' the human experience we deal with due to *die Unabschließbarkeit aller Erfahrung* (German for 'the interminability of all experience') (*ibid*).

Possible interpretations are infinite, although it is reasonable to state that the process of *conversation* and dialogue has a transformative power and leads to better insights, both of our communality with others and of our own 'self'. With regards to the truth of any claims made of the findings, there is more emphasis

in this present study upon ‘meaning’ rather than ‘truth’. The stories and text resound as true, because they are *meaningful*, not as meaningful because they are *true* (Doan and Chase, 1994). Furthermore it is necessary to accept that people’s perception of ‘truth’ is subjective and even the factual structure of their experience can change with circumstances and time; e.g. with apparent contradictions being made during the course of the interview, or even of an utterance.

Nevertheless it is in these rich and nuanced interpretations of people’s narratives, where this thesis broadens into a wider discourse and fuses my personal ‘horizon’ with other ways of thinking: with the empirical narratives; the ‘horizons’ of other stakeholders in the promotion of language pedagogy, e.g. those of educators and institutions; the research community in this field and others, and those of the socio-political players.

Once again it is necessary to reiterate that it is not possible to separate the ‘meaning’ from the ‘impact/ effects’ (i.e. what it does) of learning another language. In this chapter the participants’ ‘horizons’ (Gadamer,2001) are fused with some of the relevant ‘horizons’ in the literature review by taking each of the six topic areas discussed in chapter four in turn:

- Identity;
- Cognition;
- Lifelong learning;
- Instrumentality/ non instrumentality;
- Language and culture;
- The social dimension

Each section starts with a *qualifying statement*, which constitutes a significant finding, about the nature and value of LLL to late learners in adulthood.

5.2 Identity

Learning a foreign language allows for multiple possible selves

The interviews illustrate the possibilities and opportunities for construction and positioning of oneself and one’s identity afforded by learning and using another language.

Issues of identity may be viewed as being more pertinent to *second* language-learners, living, working or studying in a country. This is due to a greater degree of regular engagement with the target language, rather than is that case with learning a *foreign* language remotely from where it is used, i.e. with LLL. However the findings bear out the fact that, even with a *limited* contact with another language, real socio-cultural and socio-historical factors present themselves, which impact upon a learner's identity. Although the experience of LLL is unique and individual, as Gadamer (*op. cit.* 45) points out, we are 'stamped' by our socialisation and our historical consciousness. It is clear that the effects of British schooling, the way of life, and attitudes and prejudices towards foreigners; the dominance of English as a global *lingua franca* and even the British metaphors used in the discourse (e.g. "*couch potato*") have all influenced the participants' language learning histories. Overall the findings suggest that:

- Being a native English-speaker is sometimes a disadvantage in finding opportunities to practise other languages;
- Recourse to English is an ever-present option and causes mixed feelings amongst participants;
- People in this age cohort have been affected in their circumstances and thinking regarding foreigners and languages by historical events and social change, e.g. the Second World War and greater opportunities to travel and to learn languages;
- One's heritage, family circumstances or where one lives affects one's attitude towards foreign languages.

At the same time this study illustrates the real possibilities to escape from monolingualism in Britain, where British people are considered to be 'language barbarians' (Tomlinson, 2004): lacking in linguistic prowess; (European Commission, 2006) intercultural competence, or 'global competitiveness' (Fernandez, 2007).

The bio data chart (Fig.1:p.103) highlights the fact that even amongst this small group of 15 British people, collectively participants have had contact with or learnt over 20 different languages: and not always mainstream European ones. However, paradoxically as Phipps points out (2007), LLLs applying their language skills abroad *need* the monolingual response from a particular country's residents in order to be able to practise that foreign language.

Equally it is possible to escape being 'marked' (Trubetzkoy, 1939) by socio-cultural factors indexing a learner's first language (L1) identity, such as educational or social background, by speaking *another* language. Speaking another language allows for an expansion of one's identity repertoire. For example John is able to establish a much more complex role for himself as i) a German-speaking *insider*, beyond that of being a regular Scottish "*squaddy*" stationed in Germany, and ii) as a *saviour*, helping his fellow tourists with translation. As in the case of Phipps's 'Scott' (2007:62) in the classroom, John struggles with his lack of knowledge of formal linguistic terminology in the class of predominantly grammar school-educated learners who are familiar with languages. Nevertheless John's solid command of the spoken language, becomes his 'linguistic currency' (Phipps, *op.cit.*62) and gives him prestige and protection in the real communicative predicaments he has experienced in Germany.

Bea and Neil are also 'marked' by their lack of knowledge of grammar and linguistic terminology in the class and manage this differently; Bea gets extra grammar tuition and Neil is self-conscious and eventually gives up class. Furthermore Bea's identity as being half-German requires her to maintain a visible competence level in the language as well as to "*find herself*".

Roger too appears to want to reinforce his adopted German identity, resulting from having had a German wife and having lived in Germany. His sense of self appears to have expanded in his retirement, by achieving a lifelong aim of getting a formal qualification for German.

Phipps suggests that in Heidegger's (1971) terms, the fact of 'dwelling' in another language 'offer[s] a change from the routines of our everyday language and everyday lives' (2007:19). As such, there is a chance to experience other ways of thinking and being. The sense of escapism, either from 'social baggage' or 'pigeonholing' (Coffey and Street, 2008) or from a lack of adventure in one's L1 identity and life (*ibid.*) is illustrated in Della's escape to a Bohemian life in Paris. This 'escape' is also noticeable in the learners' stories of travel and their immersion in the 'grand culture' of foreign literature, art and music. However, it is necessary to stress that this is a *temporary* 'dwelling' in another language or

culture for most LLLs. The examples given in Coffey and Street (*op.cit*); of Phipps's 'learn-abroad students' (2007) or of *second* language learners, such as ESOL learners in the UK (Hooker, 2007), demonstrate a much more enduring example of 'dwelling' in another language and adopting a different way of being.

The attributes of language learners (e.g. age, socio-cultural or educational background) and the learning context/ setting or even the modality of learning or using a foreign language all appear to influence the nature and texture of learning experiences. The young student learners in Kramsch's research (2009) illustrate the 'physicality' of their language-learning experiences, along with their apparent need to negotiate and re-position their identities by pushing the boundaries: experimenting and transgressing with language itself, often using technology, such as text messaging exchanges and electronic chat rooms to do so.

In contrast this 'physicality' and use of technology is not so evident for the older adult learners in this thesis:

Firstly, I was surprised with the lack of reference in the data to the sensual and physical associations of learning another language, which I experienced too in my teens, and of which Phipps (2007) also writes. The participants in this current study appear to have a much more mental and aesthetic relationship with the languages they learn. This could be because their contact with the target language is much more infrequent, less intense and more remotely located from everyday use, than that of FE/HE students, students learning abroad or immigrant learners. Equally it could be that for many people, life becomes less physical and mobile as they age, and the impact of language learning more cerebral. Added to which the centrality of the computer or mobile telephones as a space in which to either learn or even practice a foreign language, does not seem to be the same for older learners and is hardly mentioned in the interviews.

Secondly these older learners seem to be more concerned with 'being polite', doing the right thing and conforming to the monolingual norm, rather creating

their own multilingual identity in a 'third place' (Kramsch,2009). This may suggest that older learners' are more settled and aware of their own identity, rather than intent upon exploring and forging new identities, as in adolescence and young adulthood. However, it is more appropriate to think in terms of 'life-stages' rather than stereotyping age cohorts. It is interesting to note that there is communality between the two transitional and 'liminal situations ' (Turner, 1969:95;1995): that of young students *venturing out* into wider world, and that of older people, no longer active in the working world, *retiring*, in varying degrees from the wider world, especially that of work and travel. Both age cohorts are questioning their place and purpose in the world in the conditions in which they find themselves. Turner, (*ibid.*) defines 'liminality' as the space lying on the threshold between different states of being, or between the old and the new, e.g. between study and work, or between work and retirement. Kramsch argues that language learners in general may also be considered 'liminal people' (2009:43), claiming that,

subjective use of language removes individuals from their here-and-now responsibilities, allowing for play, irony, and the integration of language use into a freer realm of subjective perceptions and meanings' (*ibid.*)

LLs are truly in a 'liminal' place in that they have to suspend disbelief (Breen, 2001) in order to be able to participate in classroom interactions in England (e.g. rehearsing booking into a hotel in Italy) which mostly take place in an unauthentic and artificially created space between two cultures and languages.

Following West (1992), Hashimoto and Kudo (2010) discuss the view of identity as 'the desire for recognition, association, protection, security, safety and surety.' The stories in this study illustrate just how important it is for LLLs and leisure language *users* to feel secure, included and recognised in whichever foreign language situation they are participating. For them this may be in Lave and Wenger's (1991) 'community of practice' of the classroom. It may equally be for LLLs to feel safe and comfortable using another language in the simplest of communicative transactions *outside the classroom*, such as ordering tea or retrieving a hotel key abroad.

As Phipps (2007) explains, learning a language helps 'minimise risk'. It makes the participants feel more secure that they can avoid: being misunderstood or

misrepresented (an *ontological risk*); humiliation or misunderstanding the local ways and not being seen to be doing the 'right thing' (an *epistemological risk*), e.g. Danielle pronouncing the Italian artists' names; not getting the job done or the transaction completed, e.g. Dan writing persuasive French to acquire funding (a *material risk*) according to the local way, or having an unhappy time, e.g. Angela being unable to understand her husband's conversation with his German ex-wife (an *affective risk*).

LLL also helps to increase learners' *self-esteem* in being able to cope, be prepared and manage risk: boosting confidence, as well as increasing learners' own sense of competence, achievement and success. This appears to reinforce both Kramsch (2009) and Phipps's (2007) findings.

5.3 Cognition

Learning a foreign language has a perceivable effect on the mind/brain.

Neurological and cognitive research has suggested identifiable benefits through the process of learning a second language over a period of time. This study was not designed to experiment upon or scientifically observe any tangible benefits to the brain or cognition due to the ethical and methodological constraints of working qualitatively in the discipline of language pedagogy. Nevertheless my strong belief that LLL is beneficial to the older person, especially mentally, supported by Bialystok and her colleague's scientific work (2007), is evident in the findings. There is clear anecdotal evidence that the participants in this study perceive LLL as having some transformative power upon their brains or mind. Interesting seams of enquiry have been opened up by the interview conversations. One of the most substantial is the case of Amanda's positive reaction to learning the *new* words of Italian, rather than struggling to remember her existing English words, having suffered a debilitating stroke.

Such cases lend themselves to further investigation, perhaps in a more experimental way, combining the scientific approaches of neurology (e.g. using MRI imaging machinery) and cognitive psychology. There are also wider implications for society as a whole, which go beyond adult language learning.

This strengthens the case for the perpetuation of LLL, whilst promoting the benefits of adult learning generally, in keeping with the research supporting the positive value of adult learning overall (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2009; Biesta *et al*, 2007; McClutsky, 1973), especially for wellbeing.

Participants' comments about the impact of learning and using a language upon their brains indicate a need for complementary, scientific enquiry into exactly *how* certain learning tasks (e.g. *decoding* language) may affect different students. This brings the thesis in a full circle back to the experimental, quantitative and task-based SLA approaches discussed in chapter two.

Additionally it responds in part to the charge by authors such as Block (2003) and Mitchell and Myles (1998), who write that, although the analysis of language learning stories highlights interesting social and contextual issues, there may be a lack of attention being paid to the linguistic detail of the learning process. In this current thesis although the social and contextual factors are important, the languages themselves are not neglected, and learners' meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic awareness of languages and the linguistic process is summarised in section 4.6.2.

5.4 Lifelong language learning

Early language learning has a notable impact on adult LLL

The participants in this study have told stories which refer to the language learning they have done throughout their lives. All the participants, with the exception of Amanda, learnt a language at school, if only for one term.

Learning a language early in life appears to support Singleton and Aronin's (2007) 'theory of affordances', positing that the learning of each further language makes it even easier to learn an additional one. This gives credence to the research suggesting that learning an additional language allows for the development of increased metalinguistic awareness and skills transferral, when organising more than one linguistic system (Bialystok, 2001, *inter alia*).

The experience of learning a language at school has had a perceivable but variable impact on participants' learning in adulthood:

One key issue presented in comparing school and adult language learning is that of *volition*. This has been instrumental in the coining of the term *leisure* (from Latin *licere*, to 'allow') *language-learning* (LLL), reflecting the fact that these adult learners have been 'allowed to' undertake the LLL voluntarily. Adults tend to be largely masters of their own destiny and appreciate choice. This is evident in the interviews themselves which demonstrate varying levels of:

- agency ("*my choice*");
- solidarity (with others/with me as an interviewer);
- co-operation (commitment to reading/responding to pen-portraits);
- disclosure (personal and detailed);
- interest and engagement (e.g. reading about SLA before the interview)

These qualities are also illustrated in the participants' stories, in the fact that language is as much about issues of *saving face*, *solidarity and support* (Aston, 1993) as it is for *negotiation of meaning* when communicating.

Equally adults engage with more complex processes such as research entirely of their own accord, as demonstrated by the fact that all the participants had volunteered, with 10 out of the 15 strangers to me: with no tangible incentive for participating in the research.

A clear benefit from attending an adult language evening class lies with the fact that the participants appreciate attending classes of their *own accord*, as and when they want to. Attendance at class can be sporadic because of this. LLLs are also highly-motivated and enthusiastic learners because of *choosing* and *being interested* in the subject; they are not compelled to do so. This supports research by Robert Gardner and his colleagues (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Masgoret and Gardner, 2003) suggesting that motivation towards language learning made *intrinsically* rather than *instrumentally* (Ryan and Deci, 2000) is stronger and more enduring.

This present study also dispels to some extent the general hegemony in Britain that somehow FLL after formal schooling is elitist and only for 'well-educated,

middle-class linguists' (Phipps, 2007:62). A benefit derived from the LLL and ACE contexts in general is that some of the self-regulating factors of higher education do not exist, e.g. there are no admission criteria and anyone over 16 years can enrol.

The findings demonstrate a wide range of educational backgrounds and experience amongst the participants. Indeed only three participants (Della, Hilary and Lyla) went to university and are qualified teachers. Lyla talks about her German class as being a "*leveller*". Della describes enjoying the social, personality and educational mix of the class.

The findings also highlight the influence of the inequalities and variances within the British schooling system, e.g. grammar versus state school; the variable level of attention paid to grammar and linguistic terminology and the lack of opportunities for foreign language study.

It is also interesting to note the framing of adult language learning as *educational catch-up* for opportunities either missed or previously unavailable at other points in participants' lives. Some of the learners missed out on having any meaningful contact and engagement with foreign languages at school (notably Amanda, Angela, Trevor, John and Neil). There are also benefits to be derived in *self-esteem* from achieving a qualification in a language in later life, described by John and Roger. The fact of being retired: having more time and maybe fewer family commitments, also affords more opportunity to enrol in a LLL class, and derive the other benefits outlined in this thesis.

These older LLLs do not perceive themselves as unduly disadvantaged by learning a language later in life. The findings do not contain descriptions of the problems or 'maturational constraints' (Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2003) associated with age and language learning outlined in the SLA literature. In describing their experiences of language learning in late adulthood, participants have mentioned some loss of memory (Lyla, Della); some lack of practice in being able to study and retain information (Bea) or some reluctance to work as hard as is required (Dan). The pedagogical implications from this are clear. As Marinova-Todd *et al* (2000) point out,

Even though teachers can do little to improve a student's age, they can do much to influence a student's learning strategies, motivation and learning environment (2000:30).

LLTs do not usually demonstrate overriding concern with achieving the 'native-speaker' or 'near native-speaker' competence in the target language described in the SLA literature (e.g. Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2003). This advanced level of performance or attainment is not applicable or even *desirable* in this context. Institutionally there are no formal assessment criteria in LLT settings and the SLA literature suggests that with this age cohort and limited study time that this high level of attainment is rarely *possible*.

LLTs seem unconcerned with the deficit SLA model, which positions adult learners as inherently more inferior learners than younger ones. Nevertheless the findings do reflect elements of Lenneberg's 'critical period hypothesis' (1967), in that learners have to *work hard* at learning a foreign language; they need *instruction* and find the language learning process difficult as well as trying to *lose their [British] accent*.

The learners with greater levels of competence in their *spoken* command of the language tend to have achieved this because they have lived abroad earlier in their life and have learnt the language naturalistically without formal instruction, e.g. Trevor, Roger, Victor, Bea and John. However in general, LLTs' aspirations for 'success' tend to be much more modest in that they want to use the language for small exchanges, such as shopping or getting about, or for relatively simple social communication. The implication from this is that the *communicative* nature of the language they learn, and the *social* dimension of the language learning class is very important.

5.5 Instrumentality/ non-instrumentality

LLTs attend classes for both instrumental and non-instrumental reasons

The framing of this particular type of non-compulsory adult language learning as *leisure* language learning permits a wider interpretation of the underlying motivation for adult learners to enrol in a language learning programme.

Learners are understood to participate for reasons and contexts connected with *leisure*, rather than with obtaining qualifications or specifically for coping with everyday communication and living abroad. The further question posited is whether learners should be defined and identified by their motivation or the context of their learning environment. This refers back to the earlier conceptualisation of context and motivation (chapter two).

What is clear is just how difficult it is to separate out the actual reasons or motives for: *deciding* to learn a language; *maintaining* the motivation; *using and applying* the learning and *evaluating* the benefits from the learning and its application. Motivation is a dynamic and multi-faceted process, as illustrated in Dörnyei's and Ottó's dynamic 'process model' (1998) of motivation. For example: Jackie starts to learn German partly as "*something of interest*" to avoid being a "*couch-potato*" (section. 4.2.5). However, realising that she is good at it she wants to "*make progress*"; the 'social' importance diminishes: changing her motivation.

To match learners' initial expectations and motives with a learning programme is an intricate business, as a learner's motivation, frame of mind and energy all fluctuate over the duration of a learning programme. *Unexpected* outcomes and identifiable benefits for learners are the substance upon which good teaching practice is judged (e.g. by OfSted).

This has both methodological and pedagogical implications. Investigating motivation by quantifying it into neat taxonomies, as in Gallagher-Brett and her colleague's '700 reasons for learning a language' report (2005) can be one-dimensional. Even an empirical enquiry (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2009) looking specifically at *adult* participation in learning (albeit in general rather than for language learning specifically) provides a rather nebulous classification of the benefits of participation in adult learning. Reasons for participation such as for 'interest' or 'personal development' are not informative for educators. Qualitative methodology permits richer insight and reflexivity about the complexity and ambiguities of adult language learning. This enables a pedagogical response to the effects of learners' routes to learning; their previous experience and expectations.

Phipps's (2007) research has framed adult learning in similar learning settings as: '*tourist language learning*' (TLL). It is sometimes the case that LLLs participate in a class for reasons connected with travel, e.g. Neil, Dan, Jackie, Hilary, Roger and Angela. However there are participants who indicate that they do not particularly *enjoy* travel or tourism, such as Max and Della. Additionally learners' location i.e. in the south-west of England, away from main travel-hubs; continuing ill-health and lack of funds do not always make it possible for these LLLs to travel abroad to practise their foreign language *in situ*.

Equally the participants describe engaging in LLL for *academic, intellectual and aesthetic* reasons and "*learning for learning's sake*" (Danielle).

However these learners also come to classes to be able to improve upon, practise and maintain their language skills. It strengthens the power of lifelong learning to allow older adults to continue to 'learn to know' and 'learn to do' (Delors, 1996) and increase their 'human capital' of skills and acquired knowledge (Schuller and Watson, 2009).

The participants do indeed describe their experiences of having to speak a foreign language for specific *instrumental* communicative reasons e.g. eating or mealtimes (Dan, Victor and John); going to change money (Lyla); handling luggage (Trevor); reading road signs (Angela & Max).

5.6 Language and culture

Adult language learners have strong reactions to linguistic structure and form, and 'culture'.

There is an important dichotomy in language pedagogy. It concerns the degree to which there is emphasis in language teaching programmes upon the *linguistic structure and form* of a foreign language or upon *communicative competence and social interaction* and associated naturalistic approaches. Quite simply put; this is a matter of *structure* (commonly referred to in classes as 'grammar') versus *communication*.

Lyla correctly observes that learners in the class tend to fall into two groups concerning their attitudes towards “*grammar*” and its complex meta-terminology and rules.

These attitudes depend upon: their *previous route* to language learning; their personal *disposition*, and also their *educational background*. There are some assumptions that proficiency and competence in grammar rules/terminology are associated with literacy skills such as reading and writing:

If participants have learnt the language *naturalistically* and *communicatively* often by living in the country, such as John, Roger or Bea, and with the emphasis on speaking, they often describe struggling with grammar and the requisite terminology. People who are “*hot on grammar*” e.g. Jackie, Lyla and Angela, are often less confident about speaking and listening.

It is certainly true that the participants who attended state schools which select pupils on ability (known confusingly as ‘grammar schools’ in the UK) and who have had formal grammar training, appear to find linguistic structure/ form easier later in life. However this depends on their engagement and interest at school, because Roger, Dan and Bea, all keen *verbal* communicators of their target language and ex-grammar school pupils, describe their problems with grammar and the written language, especially with grammatical terminology, e.g. the infinitive.

This suggests that competence in grammar may be linked more to *disposition* rather than to educational experience. Interestingly, Max, Bea and Lyla all believe it necessary to pre-prepare for the focus on grammar that they perceive as part of formal classes, prior to actually attending classes.

In terms of the SLA literature concerning the place of *instruction*, and in particular *explicit instruction* (including the explicit instruction of grammar and meta-linguistic terminology) the findings relate back to the ‘functionalist, technicist discourse’ (Phipps, *op. cit.*) of the potential competencies and attainment of adult language learning. Some SLA and AL authors have pointed out the need for adult second language learners to have *formal instruction*,

especially explicit instruction, to compensate for any cognitive disadvantage that may result from being older (de Keyser, 2000; Doughty and Long, 2003; Loup, 1995). Metaphorically speaking, as an adult if your brain is programmed to speaking English, then you have to ensure that any new language system is systematically *installed* in your brain's computer, rather than just expecting to be able to pick up words or phrases randomly for any sort of meaningful use. All of the participants agree that whatever their opinion regarding learning autonomously or using a literacy aid such as a phrasebook, that there is a need and a place for formal instruction, preferably with others.

One interesting discovery concerns the degree to which Latin has been influential in the experience of these learners. Its importance for the participants appears to be that it helps with etymology and understanding grammatical structure and terminology, both of English and other modern foreign languages (MFL), especially a logical language like German. The participants refer to liking to know what is correct in their linguistic output and "*getting it right*", which is often informed by a distant memory of school Latin.

Latin also forms the stem of the Latinate languages (French, Italian and Spanish) studied by many of the participants. There are those who like a) its reliability; b) the fact that it does not change; c) that it does not require verbalising and d) that it is strongly systematic. Lyla even admits that such structure results in her "*feeling safe*". In the light of current lobbying in England for a re-introduction of the classics, especially Latin, to British curricula, this may provide an interesting area for further enquiry.

Regarding *culture*, the key finding has been the discovery of different attitudes towards the inclusion and place of 'culture' in learning another language. I concur with Fernandez (2007) and Crozet *et al* (1997) who write of the necessary link between knowing the target language and the target culture. They assert that, without the former, cultural knowledge cannot be meaningfully understood. Fernandez writes how language '*encodes and reflects*' (*op.cit*:13) the target culture, as well as '*indexing*' it. This resonates strongly with participants such as Amanda and Hilary.

On a socio-political level language learning is useful for strengthening a nation's intercultural competence and its 'social capital' (Schuller and Watson, 2009). This also combats the national disadvantages of monolingualism to which Fernandez (*op. cit*) refers.

However I have observed that many LLL classes tend to privilege study of *linguistic form*, rather than focusing upon issues of *culture* or the way of life in the target country. Learners at LLL classes are assumed to come along to *learn the language*. Culture may be neglected at the expense of language, rather than the reverse being true.

Particularly in the case of the 11 participants attending the German class, the emphasis in the class appears from their descriptions, to be largely upon the *language*, rather than the *culture*. They experience their contact with *everyday foreign culture*, i.e. the way of thinking, life and being of other peoples, either through travelling abroad or through their own efforts to engage with *grand culture*. The latter includes appreciating the 'complex cultural artefacts' (Carter and Long, 1991) such as literature, poetry and art, 'encapsulating the accumulated wisdom, the best that has been thought and felt within a culture' (*ibid.*:2). This is illustrated by learners such as Della, Hilary, Max and Danielle who talk of their appreciation of foreign art, music, film, literature and architecture.

My belief about teaching LLL has always been that if learners cannot practically access the *culture* of the target language, then it is necessary to bring the *culture* (even in some contrived way) into the class, e.g. by bringing in a taster of a country's food or drink, or reading foreign poetry with the class. Trevor and Amanda describe how tasting Italian food or hearing how Italian people live in classes has broadened their horizons, e.g. making them confident to seek out Italian foods in British supermarkets, as well as prepare them both culturally and linguistically for their trip to Italy. This also serves to bond the class socially as reflecting Phipps's (2007) description of sharing sweets in her class. Including *cultural* as well as *linguistic* information in the class prepares the learners for what local cultural customs to expect, e.g. the example that Phipps (*ibid*) gives

of the Italian custom of handing a passport to hotel reception staff upon check-in.

Surprisingly the subject of the *everyday culture*, e.g. the food or the rituals, of the people using their target language figures far less than I had anticipated in the narratives. The participants' references to the sensory dimension of the cultures they have contact with through their LLL seem to be confined to how they perceive the *languages* themselves. This regards either how a language is written or how they learners hear it, e.g. its "*romantic*" qualities or sound.

Participants' preferences for one language over another tend to be influenced either by their language learning histories, circumstances (e.g. an available class) or aesthetics (e.g. Danielle preferring the "*passion*" of Italian over "*guttural*" German).

There also may be more complex associations with a specific language itself, as is born out by the psycholinguistic literature, where there can be both *positive* (e.g. Amanda with Italian) and *negative* (Greenson, 1950) psychological links with a particular language (e.g. Roger with Latin languages).

5.7 The social dimension

In both the formal learning environment and using the language beyond it, social interaction with others results in multiple benefits for LLLs.

The social dimension in this study concerning LLL encompasses three different aspects of socialisation and social interaction: a) 'significant others'; b) the learning environment and c) applying LLL in the wider world.

Significant others in a learner's life, i.e. friends and loved ones have been indicated as being influential in initiating and sustaining both learners' own language-learning as well as that of others (Dörnyei, 2001; Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2004). In fact Dörnyei cites this as a key motivational category towards language learning in his review of the motivational literature (2001).

The influence of 'significant others' upon the participants' attitudes to LLL is evident in the findings. Participants demonstrate that they have undertaken LLL in order to: support; accompany; help out with their own or others' learning, understanding or relationships (e.g. when a son's partner speaks another language). However, Trevor and Neil both point out from experience that *not* speaking a foreigner's language is not necessarily a barrier to an intimate relationship.

The same feelings of solidarity and support arise within the groups of learners in the *LLL learning environment*:

Della is particularly struck by this quality of her German class, especially as she admits to being "*naturally anti-social*". She has grown to appreciate the social dimension of the class, where she has both broadened her group of friends and been part of a support network for a seriously ill class-member. Hilary also echoes this spirit.

Phipps refers to this 'fluidity, communitas and social bondedness' (2007:43) in the similar TLL context, and Kegan *et al* (2001) comment upon the sense of solidarity and importance of peer groups in their study of ESOL classes. However British LLL tends to be coloured to some extent by typical British reserve in social situations. Several of the participants state how important the social dimension of the class is to them, e.g. Jackie, Danielle, Amanda, Lyla, Dan and Bea. However, there are several caveats to this classroom sociability, with different effects on individual learners:

- Lyla and Victor like the fact that they can choose the extent to which they interact with others and that it is not necessarily about friendship *per se*;
- Danielle and Jackie privilege 'making progress' over the socialising aspects of LLL, with Jackie measuring her progress against others;
- Bea feels in awe and envious of more competent classmates, although she enjoys the "*chit-chat*";
- Lyla sometimes feels slowed-down by less-able learners in the class, although it gives her chance to reflect;
- Danielle and Dan like to use the class as a forum to "*show-off*";
- Amanda likes to take a passive stance: listening to and admiring more-able learners in the class;
- Angela says that she does not like to "verbalise" things in the class and Neil does not like speaking out loud in the class.

In previous empirical research carried out on the LLL environment and the ecology of the classroom (Hooker, 2008), the questionnaire results indicated that the elements of 'fun' and socialising in the class were important to learners (*n.75*). However I believe that methodologically such abstract terms as 'fun' or 'enjoying being with others' need to be qualified rather than quantified. There is a need to probe deeper and consider contextual variances, especially concerning interaction and communication with others. As Breen writes,

It is a truism of social anthropology that no social institutions and relationships can be adequately understood unless account is taken of the expectations, values and beliefs they engage. (2001:122-134)

Regarding *applying LLL in the wider world*, two key themes have emerged which mirror Phipps' findings in her anthropological research (2007), 'human-relatedness' and the concept of the 'virtuous, courteous guest' (Phipps: *op.cit.*). The evidence demonstrates that speaking another language is much more complex than just a functional exchange or transaction. LLLs like to make a human connection with others, even in the most fleeting of communicative situations.

They couldn't have been more wrong about the class. Laddy loved it. He learned the phrases that they got as homework each week as if his very life depended on it. When any Italians came to the hotel he greeted them warmly in Italian, adding *mi chiamo Lorenzo* with a sense of pride, as if they should have expected the porter at a small Irish hotel to be called something like that.

(Binchy, *ibid.*:372)

CHAPTER SIX SUMMARY

This chapter outlines some of the key claims and contributions to knowledge that may be surmised from the chapters of this thesis.

The contributions made by this research project can be considered in several different ways: i) substantively (in terms of the picture sketched of leisure language learning (LLL); ii) methodologically; iii) pedagogically; iv) personally and v) politically. It is not easy to separate out the various implications of this study into these five categories. For example the issue of personal implications for me is interwoven into the whole text of this thesis because I am at the same time: a researcher interested in the research process; a teacher interested in pedagogy and a person interested in making a difference to the society in which I live.

It is fitting to start with summarising what *substantive* claims to knowledge can be understood from the findings, as well as establishing how comprehensively the research question has been addressed. The research question is:

What does learning a foreign language 'do' and 'mean' for older adults learning a language in community settings in the UK, from the learners' perspective?

It is comprised of two aspects: a) the 'impact/effects' of LLL and b) the 'meaning' LLL holds for older adults.

In chapter two, the debate pursued a course through different 'third-person' perspectives regarding adult language learning, especially the *impact or effects* of age/ ageing upon the processes of acquisition or learning of another language.

The perspective of much second-language acquisition (SLA) research to date has been largely positivistic and quantitative and given from an *outside* standpoint. This mainstream approach to SLA rests on the assumption that the 'comprehension of linguistic input is the catalyst of language development' (Breen, 2001:129-134). Nevertheless traditional SLA research provides a solid framework for educators to address the logistic, pragmatic and linguistic aspects of adult second language acquisition and learning.

What creates tension is that SLA research largely tends to portray language learning and acquisition in adulthood negatively. Consequently, language learning by older adults is mostly viewed as a process that is: i) handicapped by the neurological/cognitive deterioration caused by ageing; ii) laborious and requiring instruction; and iii) fairly unsuccessful in terms of 'ultimate attainment', 'native-like' pronunciation or even lasting retention. Furthermore a sense of learners' own *meaning-making* has been rather neglected, especially in terms of how learners view their own success or how they evaluate their own language learning experiences. Even studies with a more psychological focus such as motivational studies or with a social bias (e.g. Norton, 2000; 2001) have tended to concentrate upon what learners invest in language learning, as opposed to how it is subjectively evaluated or what learners *derive from* it. The latter provides the main focus for this thesis.

The affirmative answer from the study findings, from the *first-person* learners' perspective shows that multilingualism (in its varying degrees) for adults may indeed be viewed as an *asset*. In addition the language learning *process* itself in the community context and settings in this study, i.e. LLL, is also perceived as positive and constructive by older adults.

Notwithstanding the apparent problems with language learning later in life, there are also the practical difficulties for native English-speakers to be able to practise or access the foreign language they are trying to learn whilst in the UK. Further difficulties include a lack of available classes, insufficient numbers to run classes, or inadequate funding, and the fact that English continues to be widely-spoken as a *lingua franca*.

However in spite of this, this study demonstrates that older language learners continue to attend their LLL classes enthusiastically, obviously deriving manifold and identifiable benefits from doing so, in many areas of their life. Furthermore, the findings have in part overturned the assumption that the British, at least in this empirical sample, are incapable 'language barbarians', who find language learning laborious and unrewarding. Not only do they speak an impressive array of different languages (albeit to varying degrees), but it can be deduced from what they say in the interviews, that they have benefited widely from various elements of language learning and use in different areas of their lives.

One of the most exciting benefits to older people from learning another language lies with the *perceived effects upon the brain and the mind*: evident in the apparent benefits and mental stimulus which participants describe. Related research (e.g. Bialystok *et al*, 2001), together with further empirical work with participants like Amanda, who learnt a foreign language following a debilitating stroke, could provide opportunities for potential collaboration with other disciplines outside language pedagogy. Such interdisciplinary collaboration could inter-relate both quantitative and qualitative studies of the effects of LLL on the brain, the mind, mental processes such as learning and also the psyche.

The *psychological* benefits for adults from LLL also appear to be considerable. Research participants describe incidents and events which have affected their psychological wellbeing and how they feel about themselves. These include: boosting self-esteem and confidence; engaging in a challenging and purposeful pastime; realising intellectual, academic or aesthetic potential; and enabling a re-positioning of the self, both as they see themselves and as they are viewed by others. This can be in a way which is expansive, fulfilling, performative or even just escapist.

These types of benefits could be classified as 'identity capital' (Schuller and Watson, 2009), in that these LLLs have developed the ability to maintain healthy self-esteem and a sense of meaning/purpose in life. An alternative definition of these benefits is as 'learning to be' (Delors, 1996) in that learners develop their spirituality, aesthetic appreciation and intelligence. The participants also reflect Delors's concepts of 'learning to do' and 'learning to

know' (*ibid.*) in that they describe experiencing: a sense of achievement, competence, progress or success, as well as acquiring new and maintaining existing skills.

LLL affords adults the chance to develop build upon their skills-base, their 'human capital' (Schuller and Watson, *ibid*), but not in a regulated, outcome-driven environment, e.g. as in higher education. LLLs usually learn in a supportive and collaborative environment, where they can shape the outcomes, even the procedures and have an influence. For them participation in learning activities and even attendance are entirely of their own volition.

Equally learning another language for specific communicative needs can facilitate comfortable and effective exchanges. This 'minimises risk' (Phipps, 2007) in a variety of ways for LLLs. It protects them from both real and imagined problems, especially when travelling abroad.

At the same time it is a mistake to assume that LLL is undertaken merely for *instrumental* reasons: for quantifiable, one-dimensional 'motives'. For example, most LLLs do not enrol in evening classes to get a qualification. Directives to introduce formally-assessed programmes (normally to secure extra funding) usually meet with vociferous learner resistance. Additionally, even learners who may have started out with instrumental motivation (for example Dan sailing classic sailing ships to France) discover that they often derive other *non-instrumental* benefits: aesthetic, intellectual and social pleasure from their classes, directly from the language or the learning itself. Motivation and instrumentality are both dynamic and fluid (Dörnyei and Ottó, 1998).

Motivation is an important consideration in the ACE context, for learners, teachers, researchers, and learning-providers alike. I agree with Pinker who maintains that 'goals and values are one of the vocabularies in which we mentally couch our experiences' (1999:315). In the absence of formal assessment, matching learners' initial expectations to eventual outcomes and to learners' subjective evaluations of their experiences provides a sound method of quality-assurance of the teaching/learning process. However this can only be

meaningfully understood by dialogue with learners, rather than by measuring vague questionnaire constructs (Appendix I).

LLL is more than about just the language and communication alone, it incorporates the *social dimension* too, which manifests itself in three areas: 'significant others'; the learning environment (normally the classroom) and the wider world beyond. Learning a foreign language can strengthen and build relationships with others in all three domains and embraces such concepts as: courtesy; support; competitiveness; joint endeavour; and company. It allows people to broaden their horizons and expand their social activities and networks, thereby increasing their 'social capital' (Schuller and Watson, 2009).

A surprising discovery has been the wide discussion of Latin in participants' education. Studying a 'dead' language such as Latin suggests that language skills can be transferrable and rewarding, as well as communicatively functional. The importance of Latin, particularly in aiding the acquisition of the Latinate languages, such as French, Spanish and Italian, which feature widely on UK curricula, should be considered with view to re-introducing it into schools. Although time and circumstances may make it unworkable to introduce Latin into limited adult language-learning programmes (only 2 hours a week), its role in helping learners understand etymology, grammatical terminology and linguistic structure should not be underestimated.

There are *methodological implications* in approaching the subject of the impact and meaning of adult learning in a way that is mainly informed by hermeneutical phenomenology (HP):

One-to-interviews allow for learners to express, often controversial, opinions about their teacher, other learners, or their experiences, which they might be less inclined to do in a group forum. However unlike pure life-history or autobiographical research, there is a real need to keep focused on the matter in hand, i.e. what LLL 'does' and 'means' to learners. Even during the discourse of the research interview, an unfamiliar genre of communication to most people outside academe, older participants appear to like having a sense of purpose and to know how the interview will proceed.

In my opinion, observation of social activity, in this case of language classes, although valid for certain questions and enquiries, cannot access the timbre of the personal meaning-making that learners experience in their dealings with foreign languages. This is a mental and internal process. Breen urges researchers to be cautious of explaining the 'overt peculiarities' of the classroom and even to 'doubt the integrity of the observable' (2001, *op. cit.*), without being able to appreciate the true significance to those taking part in the discourse.

Sketching a picture of each learner's language learning history (LLH), route to and experiences with foreign languages, through means of individual *pen-portraits*, permits a closer, more finely-grained look at what has happened; what may be happening and what might happen in each person's consciousness of language learning and encounters. This methodology allows for learners' values, beliefs and goals to be firstly identified, together with the implications for each individual in terms of benefits or gains, and then grafted together with other 'pen-portraits', through communalities to create a group 'pen-portrait', or horizon. Researchers and teachers alike can sift through learners' previous experience and understand what appears to have worked, to identify a phenomenon or consider for teaching plans.

A 'pen-portrait' of a particular *class* is often requested of teachers in ACE settings to enable Ofsted inspectors to understand the constitution of a class that they may be observing. In my experience, this is normally a hastily-penned document, based on superficialities and little learner knowledge. However, it makes sense, where time allows, for teachers and researchers to make a 'pen-portrait' for each *individual learner*. Asking learners *meaningful* conversational questions about their expectations, their motivational aspirations and experience of the target language could help to inform the teacher's plans both for individuals and the class as a whole.

Regarding the analysis of the interview discourse, transcribing every word, repeatedly hearing the words again, gives a powerful sense of the emotions, the feelings and the apparent significance of the utterances both for the researcher and the participants.

The 'hermeneutic' dimension involves asking each learner to *validate* the interpretation of her/his language learning history and experiences: effectively a 'consensual interpretation' (Habermas, 1972). As a result a composite, socially-constructed 'pen-portrait' consisting of all of these 'horizons' 'fused' together (Gadamer, 2001) can portray and present the overall phenomenon of LLL more clearly, in a way that may be recognisable to different audiences.

However this thesis does not constitute a pure phenomenological study as such, because I, as the researcher, am not absent or 'bracketed' from the resulting text describing the 'phenomenon' of leisure language learning. I and my shared experiences as learner, researcher, and teacher have been present in the conversations; the iterative interpretations/ re-interpretations; and the communications with the research participants. This involved stance was needed: firstly, to stimulate an open and relaxed dialogue with each interviewee; secondly, to encourage interaction, reflexivity and disclosure from the participant; and thirdly, to break down the 'divine orthodoxy' of the researcher, thus promoting mutual equity in the interview discourse. The possible charge of 'leading' the interviewees, with my comments and opinions can be countered by emphasising my socio-constructivist and relativist approach. It is also necessary to point out that the ultimate responsibility for the final interpretative textual interpretation of the data rests with me and is coloured by my own values, beliefs and goals as well as those of the participants. This is both openly subjective and intersubjective.

Furthermore, all who are involved and participate in a conversational enquiry informed by HP can be transformed by its self-defining and deeply-reflective nature, as is evident by the reactions to the pen-portraits in section 4.8. The resonant themes emerged *a posteriori* from the data collected, and as such the learners investigated did not have to fit in their ideas or stories with any preconceived researcher ideas. I was continually surprised with the range of experiences and attitudes in the findings; human beings are unpredictable, even learners you think you know well! Additionally I do not believe that it is possible to remain dispassionate about the rich, emotive and personal data inherent in this study. Social activity and human science can be irrational, messy and subjective. As long as the interpretative text remains true to the matter in hand,

the phenomenon of LLL, I maintain that any interpretation is admissible, and representative of the variability, ambiguity and poetry of human interaction, whether in the classroom or in the research process. By studying and fusing the different 'horizons', of different stakeholders: learners, teachers, the research community, learning providers and policy-makers, no one interpretation of the meaning and the impact of adult language learning can be 'truer' than another.

At the same time, whilst I, as researcher, and erstwhile learner, have been present in the collection, the ultimate analysis and presentation of the phenomenon of LLL, such methodology has also allowed me to stand outside the phenomenon, in which I am normally active, and consider my learners and my teaching from a distance.

This has allowed me to challenge my own assumptions about language learning and teaching:

The first of my personal assumptions about LLL to be upturned was that of the social benefits of classes being unilaterally appreciated by learners, as suggested by my earlier questionnaire study (Hooker, 2008). Although the social benefits of the language class appear to be significant, various participants' comments on page 166 of this current study indicate that learners construct and understand LLL socialisation and interaction strictly on their own terms. Attitudes towards others in the group may vary considerably. For some participants (e.g. Jo, Lyla, Victor) a sense of purpose and achievement appears to be more beneficial than socialising with others in the class. It could be useful for future investigations or action research projects to measure which particular benefits from LLL matter the most to learners. This could be done by asking them to rate the benefits (social, psychological, instrumental, aesthetic, cultural, effect on sense of self, mental, intellectual) in order of importance or usefulness.

The second assumption about language learning, also reinforced by an earlier study (Hooker, 2008), that I now question, is that adults want 'fun' and communicative activities to counter the tedium of learning grammar, which is clearly not always the case. The findings show just how seriously LLLs take their learning. I realise too, reflecting my own 'horizon' and 'effective historical

consciousness' (Gadamer, 2001) of my language learning, that this assumption stems from my own adolescent experience of learning both German and Italian, living abroad in Austria and Germany, whereby I enjoyed the excitement and 'fun' of learning to speak the languages, remote from focusing on 'grammar'.

This suggests certain *pedagogical implications*:

The SLA research and the testimony of various participants indicate that some older learners both thrive upon and need explicit grammar instruction and structured learning. Others on the other hand are intimidated by focusing on 'grammar', especially by its terminology, and prefer oral or communicative activities. One participant from an earlier study (Hooker, 2007) even referred to the meta-language associated with grammar, e.g. verb tenses such as the 'present continuous', as 'black magic'. This implies a need for sensitivity on the teacher's behalf regarding learners' varying attitudes and preferences regarding learning activities. No assumptions should be made about learners' previous language experience and level of knowledge of grammar and its terminology. Each learner's individual's language skills (i.e. reading, writing, speaking and listening) can be variable. A good balance of both oral/communicative and written/grammar activities should form part of the classroom mix in order to be able to respond to learners' individual dispositions, previous experience, and expectations, with a 'tactful and action-sensitive pedagogy' (Van Manen, 1990, 1997). Each learner should also have the chance to experience a sense of achievement and competence by practising favoured language skills.

Another area highlighted by the findings, where differentiation in LLL classroom activities is important is that of 'culture'. An interest in 'grand culture' is clearly important if not all-embracing amongst these research participants. As such, I believe that it can be aesthetically pleasing and intellectually enjoyable to introduce cultural artefacts such as carefully-chosen and evocative poetry, literature and film to adult language classes at *all* proficiency levels. It can bring relief from grammar training or functional exchanges, such as going shopping, in a foreign language, to 'play' and experiment with words and understanding, especially through poetry. The repetitive oral phrasing provided with 'jazz chants' or musical lyrics can help language learners to feel more comfortable

about pronouncing foreign words. Equally a sense of everyday, living 'culture' and of place can be created artificially in the language classroom, for example by bringing in samples of food or drink from the target country. Learning a language should extend much further than merely gathering words and phrases.

Teachers could also benefit from crafting learning activities, which take into account the different cognitive aptitudes and attitudes of *adult* learners, detailed in chapter two, e.g. drawing on adults' enhanced meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic awareness, perhaps by including 'code-breaking' activities. Teachers could also ask what *type* of activities learners find useful or preferable to be able to achieve their aims. At the same time they should be prepared as Breen (2001) points out for conservative behaviour and reactions in the adult classroom, which sometimes means that learners have fixed and preconceived ideas about teacher/learner roles.

A qualitative approach to pedagogy as well as to research allows consideration of some of the more meaningful but mystical aspects of learning a foreign language. Referring to the magical and transformational qualities of language learning echoes Marcel's (1950) emphasis of the importance of evoking the 'mystery' of the phenomenon, rather than responding to a constant need to provide functional solutions to a problem, e.g. that of adult learners being unable to attain 'native-speaker' pronunciation. Equally being unable to measure something does not mean that it is worth or means less.

Understanding the nature of LLL and why adults should enthusiastically attend classes against the odds has helped me to understand, promote and hopefully perpetuate the mysterious paradox of leisure language learning.

The HP approach also allows those both in the research community and in practice more 'textured' (Law, 2004) insight into what language learning really *means* to learners. Do LLLs enrol for a specific task, a means to an end, e.g. translating for choirs? Or do they come to classes in order to be able to read Russian, or savour Italian culture? Do they experience anxiety at speaking out

loud or struggle with grammatical terminology? LLL teachers should be able to appreciate the complex and subtle ambiguities of their learners' motivation, previous experience and histories, as well the qualities and complexities of the various LLL settings. As well as linguistic and content knowledge, teachers should be able to draw and act upon the 'discretionary, intuitive, pathic and tactful capacities', which van Manen describes (1997: xviii).

Nevertheless this study has not been designed to offer or prescribe direct solutions to practical problems concerning learning/teaching a foreign language in ACE settings. Further interpretations and pedagogical applications should be subjective. The aim is more to be able to offer a deeper understanding of: the *nature of LLL*; its possible application in the world at large and the *type of benefits* that learners engaging with it might reasonably expect. I believe that the implication of this on a personal level and for other practitioners is summed up in T.S. Eliot's poem, '*The Rock*',

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time

Effectively this is what language learners are also experiencing by learning other ways of communicating, being and thinking, which sensitises them to their own familiar ways.

At the same time it is hoped that by demonstrating the value and inherent benefits to older adults of language learning LLL can be politically considered more seriously, rather than remaining at the periphery of mainstream education.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) refer to a 'macro-ethical' standpoint with research, regarding how locally-situated research can be viewed more broadly. As such there are some clear *implications for UK policy*:

A key responsibility for British policy makers should be to gather evidence of the gains and identifiable benefits for health and wellbeing of social activity. A government report, the 'Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project' (2008:33-35) highlights two pressing issues, which are relevant to this thesis,

especially with the number of people over 65 in the UK set to reach nearly 21.3 million by 2071.

The first concerns the increasing prevalence of cognitive decline, particularly due to dementia, which could end up costing the UK economy over £50 billion over the next thirty years, along with other mental disorders such as depression and anxiety. The second issue concerns addressing and targeting the social isolation, exclusion and loneliness that may give rise to these mental disorders.

One recommendation that the report makes involves 'encouraging and empowering older people to engage better in learning', as well as 'promoting social networking'.

The findings in this present thesis underline the substantial benefits which LLLs derive from: the mental and cognitive impact; the psychological boost to wellbeing and the social dimension of their language classes. The implication from this must be that by capitalising on the positive outcomes from LLL, it may be possible to reduce some dependency on pharmacological or psychiatric solutions to mental disorders in the elderly. Practical applications of continuing funding and support for adult LLL could include:

- i) rolling out language programmes in residential and care homes;
- ii) projects with partner agencies such as Age UK or the University of the Third Age, targeting the over-50s;
- iii) using LLLs as ambassadors to promote the benefits of language learning: to other potential learners, learning providers, policy-makers and schools.

LLLs talking about their language learning histories and memoirs could serve as motivational triggers for both primary and secondary school audiences in the UK, who are often disengaged from language learning. Both educators and policy makers could benefit from dialogue with LLLs about the long-term effects of language education experienced at school and future creation of opportunities to access LLL. This would have the added effect of empowering LLLs in allowing them to voice their opinions.

The benefits to society in general include some of the points outlined by Fernandez (2007) namely: the acquisition of transferable 'human' skills and

increased understanding and tolerance of other countries and cultures. LLL also encourages and promotes qualities valuable to a civilised society such as diversity, equality and inclusion.

This research study started with my abiding interest in the nature of adult language learning in community settings and my motivation to understand LLL and my practice better. It ends with my reinforced conviction that language learning and encounters with foreign languages enrich people's lives in many ways: aesthetically; intellectually; socially as well as linguistically and communicatively. It will continue on with my desire to: disseminate and act upon the research findings; carry out further interpretation and meaning-making activity through research and practice, and strive to improve the language learning experience for everyone I teach.

Appendix I

P-SPOCA Summary Form

ACL Survey - German for Improvers														
Date of Course:		13/1/09 - 24/3/09			Number in Survey:		8							
Course Code:		AL9GI21EDC			Number of Students on Course:		12							
Tutor:					% of Withdrawn Students:		0							
					% of Completely Achieved Students:		100							

Questions asked:	1	2	3	4	5	6	%	%	%	%	%	%
	Prospectus	Advert	Contact ACL	Person	Website	Other	Prospectus	Advert	Contact ACL	Person	Website	Other
1 How did you find out about your course?	2	0	2	1	1	3	25	0	25	13	13	38
2 What do you think of our prospectus?	3	1	1	2			38	13	13	25		
	Yes	No	Mostly	Partly			Yes	No	Mostly	Partly		
3 Were you given the right information about the course?	8	0	0	0			100	0	0	0		
	Work	Confidence	Knowledge	Qualification	Skill	Leisure	Work	Confidence	Knowledge	Qualification	Skill	Leisure
4 What were your main reasons for taking this course?	0	2	8	0	2	2	0	25	100	0	25	25
	Yes	No	Mostly	Partly			Yes	No	Mostly	Partly		
5 Is the course venue suitable?	7	0	1	0			88	0	13	0		
	Yes	No	Mostly	Partly			Yes	No	Mostly	Partly		
6 Does the course meet your expectations?	8	0	0	0			100	0	0	0		
	Yes	No	Some	Very little			Yes	No	Some	Very little		
7 Are you learning?	8	0	0	0			100	0	0	0		
	Yes	No	Mostly	Partly			Yes	No	Mostly	Partly		
8 Are you progressing at the rate you expected?	8	0	2	0			75	0	25	0		
	Progress to next level	Study different subject	Wait and see what's available	None			Progress to next level	Study different subject	Wait and see what's available	None		
9 Will you continue to study?	7	0	0	1			88	0	0	13		
	Teach with skills	Have good subject knowledge	Inspire and motivate and keep interest	Talk to you about progress			Teach with skills	Have good subject knowledge	Inspire and motivate and keep interest	Talk to you about progress		
10 Does the tutor?	8	0	7	5			100	100	88	63		
	N/A	Yes	No	Not asked but should have			N/A	Yes	No	Not asked but should have		
11 Have any additional needs been met?	7	1	0	0			88	13	0	0		
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor			Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor		
12a How helpful was the Pre-course information leaflet?	0	4	2	0			0	50	25	0		
12b How helpful were the staff in giving you advice & info?	1	5	1	0			13	63	13	0		
12c Do you feel that you had value for money?	Yes	8	No	0			Yes	100	No	0		

Comments:

Qu 1: 3 people chose 'other': 1 did not specify a source of information, 1 found out about the course from a previous student, 1 person asked Elfriede at another school if she taught any classes.

Qu 4: 1 person ticked 'other' and wrote 'enjoyable'.

Qu 5: 1 person wrote that the toilet facilities were very basic.

Date: May '09

Appendix II

Van Manen's six activities for hermeneutic phenomenological research:

- 1) Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- 2) Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualise it;
- 3) Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- 4) Describing the phenomenon through the act of writing and rewriting;
- 5) Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- 6) Balancing the research by considering the parts and the whole

(From: Van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching Lived Experience. Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. Western Ontario, Canada: Althouse, pp. 30-31)

Appendix III

Your language learning history and experiences.

Name:

Age (Optional): Please give exact age, or underline as appropriate

40- 50 50-60 60-70 70-80 80-90 90+

Please reply in your own words to the following questions: the space will expand accordingly for you. Only your beliefs, opinions, stories, experiences and memories are of importance to this research project, not grammar or spelling! Please feel free to write in note form if you prefer.

Please try to write about *all* the individual languages (spoken or written; ancient or modern, etc.) you have had personal contact with, however fleetingly and whatever your ability, and whether this has been through need, circumstances, study, interest, desire, volition, or usage.

The emphasis is on what the study or use of a foreign language, apart from English, even of just a few words, has 'done' and 'meant' for you during your life!

Early in your life.....

When were you first aware of another language apart from your first language: your *first contact* with a foreign tongue, and when did it appear to be *relevant/ useful* to you?

Did you learn a foreign language at *school*, or through a tutor, as a child? If so, what was that like for you?

Did you carry on studying this language in *higher or further education* at all?

Did you have any other compulsion or *need* to speak another language earlier in your life?

And since then.....

Have you ever *had to* or *needed* to speak a language for work; for family reasons or other circumstances? If so, where, why and what was that like for you?

Have you ever *chosen* to learn or study a language formally in a class, and for what reasons? If so, where, and what was that like for you?

What *aspects of your chosen language* attract you to it (e.g.: its people or customs; its culture: art; literature, music or cinema, etc.; its history; the sound of it; its words themselves; its grammar; reading it; writing it; speaking it or listening to it; having it as a skill, etc.)?

What was it like for you to study and learn with *others* in the class?

Can you remember anything that you particularly felt that you *gained* whilst at the classes? (Please give examples if possible)

Can you remember any particular *disadvantages* or negative feelings about being at the class?

Did you feel that your *expectations and aspirations* were met by learning at a class?

Was there anything that *surprised* you or that you didn't expect?

Have you ever learnt a language *on your own*, through any type of self-study? If so, what was that like for you?

Can you give any examples where you have picked up a foreign language *incidentally or informally*, for example through circumstances, work or through friends, neighbours, acquaintances, etc?

If a friend asked you the *best way* to learn a foreign language, especially if you didn't live in the country where it was spoken, what would you say?

Have you ever used a foreign language whilst *travelling*? Where, and what was that like for you?

Can you give any examples of incidents when you were particularly *pleased or happy* to know a foreign language?

Can you give any examples of incidents when you found it most *useful* to know another language?

Can you quote any examples when it has been *worrying or bad* for you *not* to know a foreign language?

Do you take or use a *phrasebook/ dictionary* or similar when you travel to a foreign country?

Which is your *preferred way of communication* in the language: speaking, listening, reading or writing?

Do you have plans or wish to *continue to study* a foreign language formally, or even try a new language?

Is there anything that would *discourage* you from learning a foreign language in the future, e.g.: cost, time, family, etc.?

If I asked you *to name 3 things* that you have '*got out of*', or *gained* from having learnt a foreign language, what would you say?

Appendix IV

XXXXXXX
XXXXXXX
5th October, 2009

Dear Language Learner,

Re: Your help with contributions to knowledge about language learning!

I am a language teacher and mature research student at the University of Exeter, with a passionate interest in adult foreign language learning. I am writing to ask for your help in contributing to my thesis, which explores the value of learning and using a foreign language, *from the learner's point of view*.

As an award-winning group your experiences and recollections as individuals are of great interest to me, to help me interpret what adult learners 'get out of' learning a language. However, I would like information about your language learning experiences *in your own words*, so I would be grateful for about 30 minutes of your time for an informal and relaxed interview. This would be arranged on a convenient time, date and place to suit, perhaps in the classroom before the beginning of your class, to talk one-to-one with me about your experiences of learning a foreign language and what this has done and meant for you. There are no right or wrong answers, and it is not a test of you or your teacher: only my attempt to define the appeal and value of foreign language learning for adults from your stories, beliefs and opinions.

I would be grateful if you could indicate your desire to participate by completing the slip overleaf and returning it immediately to * Helga. For any further information feel free to telephone me on ***** or email me on rebeccahooker@yahoo.co.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Hooker (Mrs)

*Pseudonym

(1)

I am willing to be contacted by telephone or email to arrange a one-to-one talk with Rebecca Hooker about my language learning experiences at a mutually convenient time and place.

Name

Telephone number

Preferred time and place (Please circle/ state as appropriate)

45 mins. before class begins/ other time.....

In XXXXX Centre Classroom / other place.....

Email

Appendix V

CONSENT FORM

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

- There is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation;
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me;
- Any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications;
- If applicable, the information which I give may be shared between any of the other researchers participating in this project in an anonymised form;
- All information I give will be treated as confidential;
- The researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....
.....
(Signature of participant)
(Date)

.....
(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher. If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Rebecca Hooker on: XXXXXXXX or email: rebeccahooker@yahoo.co.uk

I agree to be contacted for a further telephone/ internet interview (20/30 minutes) with Rebecca about my opinions of my language learning experiences at a mutually convenient time. Please put cross in box.

My telephone number is.....

My email address is.....

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Appendix VI

Transcription Guide

Pauses - not timed to the nearest second, but shown by: (-), short pause or, (+), long pause.

Drawn-out, slowly enunciated words - indicated after by three colons in brackets: (:::)

Fast speech – indicated by three asterisks in brackets (***)

Emphasis – word underlined.

Explanation/ summary of talk/ extralinguistic (surrounding interventions not from speakers, e.g. the sound of tea arriving) elements of discourse - indicated by text in {curly brackets}.

Omissions/ untranscribed utterances - indicated by three full-stops in double square brackets [...]

Interrupted speech – (may also be speaker interrupting own speech abruptly) indicated by hyphen at the end of the utterance, e.g. **I will have -**

Paralinguistic elements/ adverbial prosody – indicated by being in double brackets ((smiles, knowingly))

Problematic, unclear speech – indicated by being in normal brackets and sometimes with just a question mark in brackets: (?)

Overlapping speech – indicated by second speaker's words bound by single square brackets, e.g.

A: I thought I'd done it.

[B: But you hadn't?]

Time point in transcription – Indicated by numbers of hours/ minutes/ seconds in normal bracket (15.09)

Intonation – Punctuation for intonation and not grammar. Falling intonation, shown by full-stop. ; an indication that speaker may continue, shown by comma, ; questioning intonation, shown by question mark, ?; exclamatory intonation shown by exclamation mark, !

(Adapted from: Richards, K, (2003) *Qualitative Inquiry in TESOL* (2003) Basingstoke, Hants. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 81-82)

Appendix VII

Excerpt of the transcript of 'Lyla's's interview, Wed. 11th November, 2009, pp.1-6

This was an afternoon meeting in the lounge of local hotel lying between our two houses, having tea in comfy chairs and overlooking the sea. It was a fine but windy day. It was an Armistice Day and L*** and I discussed this in our preamble and also our post, non-taped discussion. This was the first time that I had met L***. L*** (Ly) aka 'Lyla' appears to find this arrangement convivial and it was certainly very relaxing and enjoyable. However I feared that this set-up would be difficult to transcribe and that there would be difficulties hearing as there was constant noise from other hotel guests, cups being placed down. It was a bit difficult to juggle the tea, the paperwork (the consent form, etc) and where to put the recording equipment. There is constant background noise from steam (from coffee machine, the tea service and a mobile phone rings loudly nearby several times. However, the noise was not as obtrusive as anticipated. The interview was engaging, flowed well, with little awkwardness or pauses.

<i>Line</i>	<i>Speaker and talk</i>	<i>Comments/Notes</i>
001:	Re: So you've not taught for years?	
002:	Ly: No. I, um, I had health problems and then I stayed home with the	
003:	children then when went back did some retraining (but I didn't want to go	
004:	back to teaching) [...]] (something secretarial work) [...]	
005:	Re: It's a stress, though. People have got <u>no</u> idea, have they? [...]]. Teaching	
006:	children, because it's not so stressful to teach adults by any stretch of the	
007:	imagination.	
008:	Ly: No, it's <u>not</u> , is it? ((small laugh))	
009:	Re: Because you've got this element, um (-) You're constantly (-) keeping	
010:	an eye on what they're <u>doing</u> . [...]] More and more you've got a sociological	
011:	and a <u>policing</u> function.	
012:	Ly: Yes, it seems like the actual <u>subject</u> (-) The actual subject seems to have	
013:	gone out the window sometimes-	
	[Re: Well, yes-]	
014:	Ly: For instance M. {her husband} and his friends used to describe themselves	
015:	as glorified <u>childminders</u> ,	
	[Re: Yes!]	
016:	Ly: And if you could get a bit of a subject into them, well, <u>great</u> !	
017:	Re: They (-) I have to say that up, up there it's fine, because they're bright	
018:	kids and there is something nice about the dynamic of a school, and the	
019:	dynamic about being around young people,	
020:	Ly: Mmmm.	
021:	Re: Because there is a <u>positive</u> energy too.	
022:	Ly: Oh, <u>yes</u> !	
023:	Re: And you feel, y'know, all this potential and it's lovely to have, um, their	
024:	interest-	
025:	[Ly: They're interested]	
026:	Re: Once you've got them engaged, they love it. I <u>even</u> got them engaged	
027:	with some 'Great Expectations' yesterday! (1.44)	
028:	Ly: Oh, <u>wow</u> ! That takes some doing!	
029:	Re: We had a <u>film</u> and I said, "Look, you know, you're going to <u>have</u> to watch	
030:	this, with no messing around because otherwise you'll have to read the <u>whole</u>	
031:	book, so ((Ly laughs)) Take good note of the film, and it's a very <u>old</u> film-	
033:	[Ly: Was it an old, very scary one?]	

034: Re: Yes! Did you see it?

035: Ly: Oh, years and years ago. Black and white.

036: Re: Yes, that's right, which is of course is a big struggle for them these days.

037: Ly: It looks even scarier in black and white!

038: Re: Well, I think it does [...] I was quite surprised because they

039: weren't - they were a bit resistant in the beginning,

040: [Ly: Mmmmm.]

041: Re: But certainly by the end- It's a good story.

042: Ly: It is!

043: Re: They were, they were, quite rapt at the end,

044: [Ly: Mmmmmmm.]

045: Re: I was quite surprised and there again that's the kind of thing that makes

046: you feel great (-) when you've got them all interested and excited. It's, it's,

047: but it doesn't happen all the time((Loud background noise – laughter and

048: talking))

049: Ly: No. And there's a lot of things when you can't get them- When you can't

050: just say look here's a film which will help you to understand without reading

051: hundreds of pages and that doesn't happen so often. But when it does, it's

052: lovely.

052: Re: Yeah, super. Right! What I wanted to do (-) if you don't mind,

053: [Ly: No]

054: Re: Yeah. Is, um, the first thing I've got to do is ((gets consent form out of the

055: bag)) is give you one of these. This is the, um, a consent form that I have to

056: do. This is the ethical consent form.

056: [Oh, yes!]

057: {Re: Explains that ethical consent form to say that I won't use Ly's real name

058: and that there won't be anything to identify Ly, unless a person had

059: information on the class. Explains about it being part of a doctoral thesis, that

060: will end up being a reference in the library for other people. Explains political

061: aims of thesis in the light of the money that is being taken away from adult

062: learning, that hopefully, by explaining what it is that people get out of their

063: learning will make a stronger case for the funding to be continued. Ly agrees

064: saying 'yes'} ((Tea arrives and is served))

065: Ly: (-) But so there should be, because there's an awful lot of adults (3.57)

066: especially older adults who left school young.

067: Re: Yes!

068: Ly: Because that's how life was!

069: [Re: Yeah].

070: Ly: It wasn't their choice,

071: [Re: Yeah]

072: Ly: And now, when they're older, at any age really, but especially when

073: you're retired, you think "Right I can start doing all these things I didn't do

074: before.'

075: Re: Yeah. So it's 'catch up'?

076: Ly: It is like a 'catch up'. And it's not necessarily because you want to go on

077: and do a degree but some people do of course and some people start this in

078: their forties and fifties and do go and do degrees and things and I think this is

079: what they always would've done had they had that opportunity.

080: {Re talks about the Government White Paper which has just emerged, which

081: divides society up into 4 age groups, up to 25, 25-50, 55-75 and over 75. Re

082: says that she supposes that that's quite a logical grouping }

082: Ly: Y-e-s. When I first heard that, I thought, up to 50, I thought, that seems

083: huge, but actually it's not.
083: {Re and Ly discuss that up to the age of 50, is the working age range}
084: Ly: And parents and everything, all fits into all of that,
085: Re: Yeah.
086: Ly: After that, they're not really parents, they're not parents with respons-
087: [Re: With little children?] (5.18)
088: Ly: No. So they've got a lot different way of life after that.
089: Re: But basically [...] where I'm at with that [...] I'm only doing a small
090: scale piece of research, only 50,000 words, so, um, I'm just hoping that it will
091: have some sort of resonance,
092: [Ly: Mmmm.]
091: Re: A lot of the research that'd done is about capabilities and skills, you
092: know, comparing younger versus older. {Re explains that she's done smaller
093: papers on exactly this topic and the international conference where she talked
094: about the instructional preferences of second language learners, immigrants
095: and refugees. She explains that she would like to have some idea of adult
096: language learning histories and what their experiences have been like ((Offers
097: tea & milk to Ly)). Carry on discussing about the strength of the tea, the smell
098: of the tea, etc} ((Ly signs the consent form and says that she's happy to do so))
099: {Re: Also explains that rather than barrage of questions would like a natural
100: conversation but has a rough plan of anticipated questions which she will give
101: to Ly, if she has any further thought when the interview is finished, and also
102: importantly to keep herself on track whilst she is asking questions. Ly finishes
103: Re's sentence for her.}
104: Ly: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do that ((quietly and apologetically))
105: Re: What's, what's that?
106: Ly: Prompt you with what you were going to say!
107: {Re: ((laughingly)) Explains that that's fine as she is always been told by her
108: husband to keep things on the subject required. She explains that her husband
109: is not a teacher and has another perspective. ((Both laugh)). Re explains that
110: this gives another non-academic viewpoint}
111: Re: I've interviewed him as well as he learnt French and German.
112: Ly: Oh, that's interesting!
113: Re: He never learnt it off me!
114: Ly: Oh, no! It's like husbands teaching wives to drive isn't it?
115: Re: Yeah!
116: Ly: It doesn't work. ((laughs)) (8.15)
117: Re: But, um, about you personally, Ly, when, um, could I ask you? When
118: were you first aware of, um, being, um, y'know, being aware of a foreign
119: language? In your life?
120: Ly: When I was six ((definitely and emphatically))
121: Re: Oh, really six, you know- Why so specific?
122: Ly: Because I went to a school- I moved from one school to another. We
123: moved a lot. So I went to that, the second school I went to, which was when I
124: six, was run by French nuns and so we were, they talked French in front of us
125: a lot and they taught us to say all kinds of phrases in French,
126: Re: Ah, right!
127: Ly: And we knew that it was a foreign language.
128: Re: Right. So you were aware of it being-
129: [Ly: Oh, yeah!]
130: [Re: So did you?]
131: [Ly: On, yeah! Quite specifically-]

132: [Re: Were you drawn to understand more of it so you could understand their,
133: their conversations?] (9.07)
134: Ly: Yes! I was fascinat-
135: [Re: So you were aware of that at, at a young age?]
136: Ly: Yes!
137: Re: That knowing another language would (-)-
138: Ly: That other people knew other languages! I think if even it was just that-
139: [Re: Yeah.]
140: Ly: And we could hear them speaking French to each other, as well as
141: speaking English,
142: [Re: Mmmhhhhh]
143: Ly: Or speaking English to us. It was quite- Actually I just remember-, not
144: being startled with it or anything, just thinking, “Ooh! ((small laugh)),
145: [Re: (It was just one of those)-]
146: Ly: It’s another language. That’s French!
147: Re: And what? -
148: [Ly: They must have told us what French was, and about this, but I don’t
149: remember them actually saying anything specifically,]
150: [Re: (?)]
151: Ly: I just remember this is what they said and we learnt lots of- I mean, they
152: always said, “Asseyez-vous!” {Sit down, in English}, and y’know,
153: Re: Oh, right!
154: Ly: And, “Ouvrez la porte!” {Open the door, in English} and “Ouvrez la
155: fenestra (sic)!” {Open the window, in English} um, and all these sorts of
156: things, all orders and commands, if you like, and everything had to be all in
157: French and they used to read us French stories while we did embroidery. It
158: was that kind of school!
159: Re: Oh, really? ((Astonished))
160: Ly: Embroidery! Can you imagine the excitement of doing embroidery?
161: [Re: So you, so you were aware (10.14) of this flow of foreign words really?]
162: Ly: Yes, but we didn’t understand half of it-
163: [Re: Did you like it? Were you attracted to it?]
164: Ly: I liked it.
165: Re: What the sort of rhythm of it or just the, the kind of-
166: Ly: ((Emphatically)) Just the sound of it. The fact that it wasn’t (English). It
167: sounded (?) much- I was only little but I can remember thinking it
168: sounded much more romantic than English!
169: Re: Oh, wow! That’s interesting! ((enthusiastically))
170: Ly: Whether that was simply because I didn’t actually know what it meant; it
171: was a bit like a code,
172: Re: Right. (-) It was like a code?
173: Ly: Yes and it was kind of exciting and you might be able to break some of it!
174: Re: Alright. And particularly, presumably being able to understand them
175: talking amongst each other as well?
176: Ly: Yes, we’d catch words that they were saying to each other.
177: Re: Right. So that, so you say about breaking a code. Have you thought about
178: ever since about the-?
179: [Ly: No. It came to me just then. I just remember this thing about]-
180: [Re: What is amazing is what happens through this process really-]
181: [Ly: Yes, because I remember, my brother and I particularly, we loved codes
182: when we were children. Anything to do with a code! ((conspiratorial voice)) I
183: suppose we were hot into codes so this was like another code, (11.09)

184: Re: [[...]] Now reflecting on it, because that's what this process does, it makes
 185: you think about it, do you think that's could, um, be part of, um, your sort of
 186: relationship with any other language you've learned?
 187: Ly: I think so((slowly)).
 188: Re: It's the breaking the code?
 189: Ly: Yes. Understanding what people are saying, um, (-) because I don't think
 190: it's rude or anything like that, hearing people speaking another language;
 191: there's no reason why they shouldn't. It-
 192: [Re: Yeah].
 193: Ly: Whereas some people don't like it. Um, but I think it would be lovely to
 194: understand what they're saying, not because I want to know what they're
 195: talking about,
 196: [Re: Yeah.]
 197: I just would like to be able to understand it.
 198: Re: What, and sort of relate these foreign words with what? -
 199: Ly: Yes.
 200: Re: What they're all about. I suppose again that's like breaking the-
 201: Ly: It's the same sort of code thing.
 202: Re: Did you move around, were you in a military family or?
 203: Ly: Um. Had been, yes. And then afterwards we just moved sort of where my
 204: father went. And when he came into civilian life and then after that he left and
 205: we just sort of kept moving,
 206: Re: Right. (12.16)
 207: Ly: And we had several schools and um (-)
 208: Re: And then did you then go on to learn a language at school?
 209: Ly: We (did have) French at school properly and Latin.
 210: Re: And Latin?
 211: Ly: Yes. (12.25) I loved Latin! ((conspiratorially and emphatically))
 212: Re: You loved Latin?
 213: [Ly: I loved Latin!]
 214: Re: So did I!
 215: Ly: Did you? Yes. It's fantastic. That's a real (-) structured ((emphatically))
 216: language. You can get hold of the rules and you know what you should do.
 217: Re: Yeah. So [[...]] that's what appeals to you about Latin, is it?
 218: Ly: I think that's why I like German. ((slight laugh))
 219: Re: Because of the rules? Do you like the grammar?
 220: Ly: Yes!! ((laughs))
 221: Re: Right. Not everyone does of course.
 222: Ly: I'm not very good at speaking at it because I can't always think of the
 223: words very quickly,
 224: Re: Mmmhfff!
 225: Ly: But I'm hot on grammar! ((slight laugh))
 226: Re: Oh, you're hot on grammar? Oh, so you know, Jackie's {classmate in
 227: same class} } hot on grammar too, isn't she? (13.01)
 228: Ly: Yes.
 229: Re: So and, um so you, you've got Latin at school?
 230: Ly: Mmmhfff.
 231: Re: I mean, I loved Latin because I had an absolutely amazing teacher at school
 232: as well-
 233: [Ly: Yes. My first Latin teacher was incredible.]
 234: Re: Um, do you not, do you find that it helps you at all today?

235: Ly: Yes! It's there in the back of so many words. It's in the stems of things. If I
 236: come across other words, especially you know the modern European languages
 237: you can recognise the stems of words and say, "Oh, I wonder if that means –
 238: and it often does.
 239: Re: And with your English. Do you read?
 240: Ly: Yes.
 241: Re: So because I think if you read.. Do you read anything that's quite
 242: challenging, that you might need (-) to sort of, like interpret words?
 243: Ly: I do sometimes! ((small laugh)).
 244: Re: Yeah!
 245: Ly: At the moment not so much!
 246: Re: Yeah but presumably with the teaching and the secretarial stuff as well.
 247: Ly: Oh, yeah. And with my husband who was a fantastic reader and read
 248: philosophy and you name it, everything,
 249: [Re: Oh, really?]
 250: Ly: Everything he read. There wasn't anything he didn't read about, um, the
 251: history of politics through all different countries, all sorts of things. (He read
 252: lots of words) Latin was really helpful, and he had also learnt Latin at school,
 253: Re: Right.
 254: Ly: So it was, we could both see it in the words. (14.21)
 255: Re: Right. So you could see it in the Latin words. And what about French at
 256: school?
 257: Ly: Yes, that was- we'd had this little start. That was until I was eight and then
 258: I left that school. But, um even so, that was (-) we didn't speak it school.
 259: Re: You didn't? No, I don't think anybody did at all?
 260: Ly: No, we didn't speak it at all.
 261: Re: Was it a convent school or a grammar school?
 262: Ly: Oh, that was the grammar school. No, but, we didn't speak it at all. We just
 263: wrote it all the time, which is why I've probably got this thing about being
 264: good at grammar, because that's what you did. (14.53)
 265: Re: Did you do any literature at school as well?
 266: Ly: French literature?
 267: Re: Yeah.
 268: Ly: Not really, only passages.
 269: Re: OK. So that wasn't part of it as well?
 270: Ly: No.
 271: Re: I think that probably came in a bit later.
 272: Ly: I didn't do 'A'- level {UK advanced-level exam taken at the age of 17/18}
 273: I just did-
 274: [Re: 'O'-level?] {UK ordinary level exam taken at the age of 15/16} (+)
 275: Ly: But I did discover quite excitingly I'd never travelled because I didn't have
 276: a passport until a few years ago,
 277: Re: Oh, really?
 278: Ly: ((imperceptible little laugh)) We went through on the way back from
 279: somewhere. We stopped at Dunkerque {in France} before we went to get the
 280: ferry home and Dunkerque was full of boards, (sort of) telling you what had
 281: happened at such and such a spot and I realised that I could actually read all of
 282: them.
 283: Re: No problem at all?
 284: Ly: It was no problem. I think that there was like one word perhaps in the
 285: middle of it that I didn't know but, and I thought," See I can't understand what
 286: everybody's saying but I can read the boards!" ((laughs))

Appendix VIII

Pen-portrait of the value and meaning of 'Lyla's' language learning history

Lyla is 66 years old.

She is retired; she was both a primary school teacher and a hospital secretary/administrator.

She and Rebecca had not met prior to the interview. She was one of the eleven volunteers recruited from the same German class.

The interview was held over tea in relaxed and convivial surroundings in the lounge of an imposing local seaside hotel, apart from being a little noisy from the chatting and tea-making all around.

1) Lyla and Rebecca break the ice by talking a lot about teaching youngsters in school and education in general and in particular the fact that the subject being taught has become comprised by behavioural management issues.

With discussion about continued funding for adult education Lyla says emphatically,

But so there should be, because there's an awful lot of adults, especially older adults, who left school young...because that's how life was!..... It wasn't their choice..... and now, when they're older, at any age really, but especially when you're retired, you think "Right I can start doing all these things I didn't do before"..... It is like a 'catch up'. And it's not necessarily because you want to go on and do a degree, but some people do of course and some people start this in their forties and fifties and do go and do degrees and things and I think this is what they always would've done had they had that opportunity.

Lyla and Rebecca discuss the fact that the new Government paper has divided people up into age groups, and that although 25-50 seems a big gap is the 'working age' and also the age for being responsible dependent children, after which there is a 'different way of life', especially with children.

Benefits: Educational catch-up; take advantage of learning opportunities with retirement (without work and childcare constraints?)

2) Lyla has a particularly vivid and positive memory of learning French at the very early age of 6, whilst doing embroidery with the French nuns at her school, who also used to give the children simple instructions in French. She was fascinated by it: attracted to the sound of it and the fact that it sounded 'much more romantic than English';

She also talks about the fact that that the language was like a code was 'kind of exciting', with the potential that you might be able to break some of it and know what it meant. This 'code-breaking' was also an interest that she had shared with her brother, as a child.

She talks of a related desire to want to understand what people are saying and to 'break the code'. She does not consider it rude when others speak a foreign language; she just is curious to find out and understand what they are saying.

Benefits: A positive and whimsical association with a foreign language inspiring a sense of security and warmth; the intellectual challenge of trying to 'break the code'; a shared interest with a loved one.

3) She talks of her 'love' of Latin: about it being 'structured' and being able to 'get hold of the rules' and knowing what she should do with this language. It implies that she is in control of this aspect of her learning and personal repertoire, as well as there being comfort in the fact that Latin (and German) is predictable and stays the same.

She describes how Latin has helped her as 'it's there in the back of so many words' and 'in the stem of things' which helps her to look at new words in other modern foreign languages and be able to guess their meaning. This was an activity that she shared with her late husband, as well as other intellectual interests and discussions. She also says that Latin helps with her English.

Benefits: An intellectual challenge; a shared interest with a loved one; knowledge of linguistic structure; a sense of control of one's learning.

4) She explains that she is not very good at speaking German because she 'can't think of the words very quickly', and also had a language education at school where the focus had been on reading and writing. However she says that in contrast she is 'hot on grammar' and this gives her a sense of competence, in the knowledge that she can master aspects of the language.

She talks of being able to read and write well, having been taught to do so; even on holiday she can read the explanatory signboards in France (about the war), even if she cannot understand what people are saying. She talks of the excitement of discovering she can do this;

Benefits: A sense of competence at knowing one is good at doing something; being able to understand when travelling; knowing the linguistic systems.

5) Travel is a relatively new thing for Lyla in her retirement, and she talks of her experiences with enthusiasm, although sadly it has been constrained and spoilt for her somewhat by the loss of her husband. Language is part of this, as for example she says that she would have liked to have heard some French in Canada. She and Rebecca discuss some of the cultural and social aspects of languages such as: French in Canada; the variations of Latin usage in Europe, e.g. in Rumania and in Switzerland, and the impact of artificial languages such as Esperanto. Lyla likes the idea of having a common language in which to communicate, but acknowledges that people like and are loyal to their own language.

Benefits: Discovery of the place and usefulness of language when travelling; an interest in foreign languages for themselves and their culture.

6) When her children got older Lyla learnt a little Italian at adult classes at the hospital at which she worked. She found this to be 'lovely', as she found the language 'beautiful to listen to' and at the same time she also had an Italian neighbour. Although this learning was cut short, due to the teacher leaving, Lyla was soon able to learn Spanish as she did an exchange with another Spanish lady who lived in her road; Lyla taught this lady the piano, whilst in turn she was taught Spanish.

I started learning Spanish then.... which was really nice and that was actually talking and only some grammar.... She kept bringing her friends round to the house so I'd have to listen to conversations and try to join in and.... I did! [enjoy that] some of the time I could only grasp bits of what they were saying. But they were good; as soon as I looked like they may say something, they all waited and gave me time to speak, which was nice otherwise I would have never got a word in!

She says that she prefers Italian as a language, even though she actually learnt less of it, from the 'sheer sound of it'. Italian helped her to learn Spanish, as did French and Latin, although she found the lack of personal pronouns difficult. In turn all her children learnt Spanish at school, with her son also doing German and her daughters doing French.

Later in her adult life Lyla also tried to learn French on her own, given that she thought that she may go there in the future. She was trying to learn it on her own with discs and did not 'seem to get going with that on [her] own'. She said about this piece of autonomous learning:

That was alright. I had a nice dictionary and I was sort of working- and then I started to get books to read French books to read... because I wasn't talking. That was quite good. I quite liked doing that but it was a very academic exercise, really, rather than to do with the language. I don't know how much it would've helped if I'd been in France.

In contrast she talks about significant times when she uses Spanish on trips to Spain,

Then I got two occasions to go to Spain, and I found I actually spoke Spanish when I was there... not very fluently or anything but I could get by! ... I felt brilliant! ... I liked the fact that someone could understand me, and then that they would speak slowly enough for me to be able to understand them. And I thought, "I can nearly have a conversation in another language!", and I thought that was really exciting!

She recounts a story about using her Spanish to ask directions and explains how it makes her feel:

Ly: I remember asking somebody for directions to a station, a railway station. I was with my sister and... I sort of rehearsed in my head, like you do, and I stopped someone who looked local, and... she was very polite and I had two gos at saying it, then she realised what I meant ... and she was explaining where to go and I could foll-read the directions so that was OK, and then she suddenly asked were we having a nice holiday. And I just felt so pleased that she followed it on with that...

Re: So it wasn't just a question of kind of getting it all done and finished?
 Ly: No, she actually asked if we were having a nice holiday, and I thought, "Oh, that's so nice!", and I almost forgot to answer. I was so thrilled with the-
 Re: You were so thrilled with the sort of flow of conversation?
 Ly: Yeah. And I thought this is lovely and this is why people learn another language so you can actually do this, and have this-
 Re: Relate to somebody?
 Ly: Relate to someone.

Benefits: The excitement and thrill of being able to communicate; relating to other people; being able to understand and be understood; passing on a love of and an aptitude for languages to your children; the sociability of learning and using a language; an aesthetic appreciation of a language for its own sake.

7) Lyla considered doing French lessons after this, but then her son got engaged to a girl from Austria. As she was then invited to Vienna in Austria to meet her son's future in-laws, she thought that she could not go with 'no, no words of German' and set about trying to learn the language. She says how she admires her daughter-in-law who has degrees in several languages, as well as having been tri-lingual from an early age.

When questioned about her main motivation for learning German, Lyla replies,

Ly: The main (reason) was that I thought that I would go to Vienna again and, or at least Austria again... I just, actually, suddenly, when I realised I might not go very often, and I suddenly thought, "Yes, I actually do like this language!" It's structured! It's like- it reminds me of Latin! It's got rules, and y'know...
 Re: What does that structure do for you?
 Ly: It makes, I dunno, it's like feeling safe or something...
 Re: And that you can navigate your way round?
 Ly: Yes. 'Cos you know what you're supposed to do. And OK there are irregularities, but it's mostly regular, whereas in French I could. I would- I could work out the grammar.

Lyla also expresses how pleased she is with the reaction to her trying to speak German, and being encouraged to speak it ,

I also discovered when I was over there, that they were much more tolerant of how well or badly I said it. People were very good at just letting me say it and then understanding what I'd said... without making me feel that I was absolutely useless at it..... I got the feeling, especially as I hadn't been to Germany... That they were just so They were actually pleased that I was trying to say it in German! ...

She also explains that her daughter-in-law's multi-lingual family have a rule which is 'to do with politeness', which is to always talk in the language, which is spoken by the majority of the people present. However Lyla points out that this has been difficult for her son as he would like to be in the position to practice either his Spanish or his German

Benefits: Courtesy; pleasing and relating to others with sympathy and tolerance; understanding others and being understood; being included even by knowing just a few words; showing willing to relate to other people: making the effort; measuring up against other people with linguistic skills; to support or help a loved one out; a sense of safety and security in the structures of a language like German or Latin.

8) Lyla is very self-aware and as an ex-teacher she can be reflective about her own learning processes, needs, preferences and strengths and weaknesses.

Ly: Learning on your own's very good when you really want to get on with it, ... because it's one-to-one and that's excellent and Helga's a lovely teacher... And I was really getting on well but I found that she would tell me about things that had been happening in the class, and I suddenly realised that I was actually missing the social aspect of learning this language,-

Re: What with other people?

Ly: Yes

Re: What's good about that?. For you?

Ly: It's very encouraging. We encourage each other. Some are better than us and some are not as good as us but we all kind of seem to encourage each other.

Lyla also allies herself with another lady in the class who likes grammar and outlines the merits of being good at grammar or preferring to speak out. Later she says how important it is to know which type of learner you are:

Re: I mean, some people are more competitive than others but I don't think that's applicable to absolutely everybody.

Ly: No, it's not. Some of us are really not very competitive. Like Jackie and I, we're not competitive and we both accept that we find trying to express ourselves more difficult. You know, the grammar is- and some people find grammar really difficult,

Re: Difficult?

Ly: To comprehend.

Re: But they're quite happy to talk?

Ly: They're quite happy to talk... And that's how they are! And I think it's actually better for them because if they're in Germany or Austria, they can talk!which is the big thing. We might be able to correct what they say, but they can say it in the first place!

Lyla says that she enjoys the social side of classroom learning:

Ly: Yes!! ...The social, the social aspect is actually quite important... to me... I wouldn't say that it doesn't matter what I'm doing as long it is social...but I do go to another class as well, an art class ...which is also sociable,

Re: So that aspect is important to you?

Ly: It is now because...

Re: Because of being without your husband?

Ly: Yes. So I like to have social places too, otherwise I would be at home more... or on my own.... I also like the fact that I do keep practising talking this

language in front of each other...Which makes us, makes me anyway, more confident.

When asked about what she would say/ recommend to someone (an adult), who wanted to learn a language in England, there was a slight misunderstanding when Lyla replies (referring to choice of language rather than type of mediation):

Ly: I think, I think it goes into two types of people, those who can learn to speak readily... And those who like the grammar and will gradually learn to speak. I think you need to know which you are... And then, so if you know that you can choose whichever language appeals to you, either by the sound of it or,-

Re: Oh, but I mean, which would you say was the best way, what, y'know. Would it be learning on your own with tapes or? ... Private lessons or going to a class?

Ly: Ah? I think for the first- I found personally at the beginning learning on your own with tapes or, or private lessons or something just to get a bit of a grounding in it...This is what I've learnt finally, (?). You do need some grounding of grammar; you do need to understand the grammar, but really, you really need to use it, just use it, as part of the language you talk,-

Rebecca and Lyla discuss the fact that most of the people in the class, or even walking down the street outside struggle with grammar because they did not learn at school. They talk about it being elitist: knowledge of the rules of grammar, in England being for only those who have attended private school or grammar schools. They appear to be in disagreement that grammar should be taught explicitly. They agree that a knowledge of grammar generally is more common amongst older people between the ages of 45-70 here in the UK.

Lyla has also prepared for travel before by getting a phrasebook and being ready before going. She firstly describes her reaction to going to the Tyrol in German-speaking Austria and what she thinks of the accent and the language:

It was lovely, and it was a really soft accent, and it was slower and I could, ... I always try and buy a little book that's got language phrases in it, wherever we've been; my sister and I mostly went on holiday with my husband and I, we always bought these books and tried to learn lots of phrases before we went,-

She also describes her reasoning for speaking a little of the language before she goes:

Because I went to Madeira once for a fortnight I tried to learn all these Portuguese phrases before I went! ... And I thought, I can't remember them now but I was determined not to go and say nothing, so I could say "Hello" and "Thank you" and you know things like that....I feel polite ... It makes me feel really- I think it's important. It's their country and it's their language, and it's really, even I can only just say, "Thank you". I think it's really important to try.

Benefits: Being prepared for all communicative situations; courtesy and politeness; relating to people and their culture; sociability; having meaningful and purposeful social interaction; being exposed to and hearing many variations of a language being spoken; knowing the best

and most effective way for you to learn; having a joint or shared endeavour or purpose with others; having a distraction or an escape from one's preoccupations and worries; building self-confidence and self-esteem.; having a forum for practicing to speak and listen to the language; building an interest in the cultural and social aspects of languages in themselves.

9) Lyla has several comments to make when asked throughout the interview about the more negative aspects and downside of learning a foreign language, or being in a language class.

Firstly in general she notes that

I find remembering the words much more difficult now that I'm older... but I do work at it, and learn it more and once they're in, they're in!... Unless I'm really tired, in which case I just can't remember anything!.....I like to have words in whole sentences.....Words on their own, I find difficult, ... unless, sometimes there are words which are very alike and I have to try learn them in a group...which means that they are very similar, but they each mean something quite different.

She also explains that one disadvantage of attending a language class lies in the fact that she is forced to go at the pace of the others and wait until they have caught up and understood. However she says that by spending longer on something than anticipated ensures that she and the other faster ones have really got it as well as they think!

Benefits: Going through concepts or ideas thoroughly in a group to cater to all speeds of learning; learning things in context; finding workable strategies.

9) Rebecca asks Lyla explicitly what learning a language does for her; what three things she could name. She explains and gives an example of a story of it in practice:

Re: I mean, OK, German, it could arguably be French, what do you think ...could you say, [are] the three most important things that it does for you?

Ly: It gives me more confidence even if I am not very good at it I feel like if I can hold my own, as it were, in the class, I feel more confident by the fact that I can do that and I feel that that would then [give] me the ability to go to another country, any country, and have a go at speaking any language,

Re: Right.

Ly: Half a dozen words anyway!

Re: So, it doesn't really matter, it's kind of giving you confidence to communicate in another language irrespective of what language it is?-

Ly: I used to be far too scared to speak – a language... I used to just listen and I would think, "Oh, I can write that down; I can write an answer for you, but I'm not going to try and say it!

Re: But now, now you would?

Ly: Now I would, yes. Well I do!

Re: And you probably understood that people, it's not such a big deal with people you getting it absolutely word-perfect?

Ly: No, I realise that now. One of the most interesting conversations I ever had was somewhere in the North of Italy, where we crossed the border from the Tyrol {Austria}, and I, wanted to go into the bank to change a little bit of money so that I could buy, my sister and I an icecream,

Re: Right.

Ly: But I had no Lire {Italian money} And I went into the bank, through all these doors, these automatic doors which go one at a time and eventually got inside, which was quite scary the, because we didn't have them here, faced with somebody who spoke no English at all.

Re: Yeah.

Ly: And I had no idea how you said that you wanted to change some money, in that one term of Italian years before, So I gradually worked on all the words I could think of that might be similar and signs and everything else and he was very patient, and tried really hard to understand what I was- And eventually we got it, and I was so excited !

Lyla explains that this confidence has come exclusively from going to foreign language classes, as she would not have attempted this before.

Lyla's second gain from going to the classes comes from the 'social aspect' of attending evening classes, which she says could not come from learning off the computer or in any other way. However this learning socially happens in a way that it is 'unobtrusive', in that she can choose how far she wants to interact personally with her classroom peers. She missed the sociability of the class when doing private classes;

Off the record, when the digital recorder was turned off, Lynn said that the third personal gain that she thought she had derived from the class was that there was a feeling that the class was a 'leveller' and that in the class everybody was equal and all doing the same thing.

Benefits: Sociability; a sense of joint and shared endeavour; a purposeful and meaningful pastime/ interest; a sense of satisfaction, self-esteem; builds confidence; creates an equal and equitable and comfortable environment; mixes people equally; a thrill at succeeding; being able to communicate abroad.

10) Regarding the future, Lyla says that she would like to possibly have a try at French again as she had learnt so much of it school. As she has only done a little bit of travelling in her retirement, only 6 years, she would like to do some more.

Rebecca says that she feels that Lyla has had good and wide experience of languages, particularly in having a taster of lots of languages. Lyla replies that she is 'terrible for getting bored' with things; for example she changed her job in the hospital three times, which may discourage her from carrying on with a language. On the plus side of this she says that this love of novelty and tasting a few languages means that she's got a 'broader view of languages'.

Benefits: To have a universal picture of how languages fit together; to have a little bit of knowledge on lots of co-related subjects, i.e. languages and their cultures.

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